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Becoming authors : the social context of writing and local publishing by adult beginning readers.

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BECOMING AUTHORS:
THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF WRITING AND LOCAL PUBLISHING BY ADULT BEGINNING READERS

A Dissertation Presented

by

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Por su vivo ingenio
y buen corazón

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ABSTRACT

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BY ADULT BEGINNING READERS

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In a small but growing number of adult literacy programs across the United States, adult beginning readers have begun to write about their lives and publish their work as individual books, newsletters and anthologies. The use of the writing process in adult literacy classrooms is part of a more general trend toward greater learner participation and has been initiated primarily at the grassroots level. Although this practice is spreading, to date no comprehensive studies of its history, nature or potential value to learners yet exist.

This exploratory study begins by gathering together information about the history of writing and publishing by adult beginning readers in the U.S. and, to a lesser extent, England and Canada, based on expert interviews, a mail survey and collections of local publications. The second, central phase of the research involves a qualitative study of the experiences of authors in three literacy programs in New England. Eighteen authors were asked to describe their life histories with respect to literacy and how they had changed as a result of becoming an author. Specific indicators included: authors' purposes for writing, their audiences, their beliefs and self-concept in relationship to literacy, learning and knowledge, their beliefs about writing and how it is learned, changes in everyday literacy practices, and plans for the future. Factors which influenced these changes, including aspects of the writing context and people in the authors' lives who helped or got in the way of their

literacy acquisition were also considered. Six authors' stories are presented as life history narratives.

Findings indicate that authors used writing as a means to re-examine their life histories, reflect on the stigma of illiteracy, overcome internalized beliefs they are unable to learn and advise others. The writing process facilitated authors' growing ability to speak out and recognize the authority of their own knowledge. This was further validated by opportunities authorship provided for taking the role of teacher and expert.

Finally, the wider implications and constraints to the entry of adult beginning readers into the public sphere are examined, along with the potential role of learners in the creation of knowledge about literacy.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Background

Literacy, social historian Harvey Graff points out, has been profoundly misunderstood by almost everyone, from expert to literacy learner. The more deeply we look, the more complex it becomes, "a problem not only of evidence and data but also a failure in conceptualization and, even more, epistemology" (1987:3). Our beliefs about what it is, who has it and who doesn't have depended very much on our histories, the communities in which we live and the values we hold as individuals and as a society. Literacy has reflected varied and often contradictory social and economic realities. And, perhaps most vitally, it has taken on the power of a cultural symbol.

During the early years of our country the European colonists, many of whom had fled religious persecution in their home countries, brought with them an earnest belief in the value of literacy as a means to gain access to the Bible and, through it, salvation. Those unable to read were attributed with a lack of moral and religious development. Teachers in those days were charged not only with imparting the skills of reading and writing but also with inculcating students with the proper beliefs and values (Fingeret & Jurmo, 1989). As our country developed, these values became associated with our growing identity as a nation (Street, 1990). Literacy was both a Christian and a patriotic responsibility (Heath, 1981). Literacy education became a tool for socializing newcomers to the norms and values of American culture and a prerequisite for a democratic society (Graff, 1987).

Over time, our understanding of literacy also became increasingly influenced by analytical and empirical ways of knowing. The old medieval outlook on life as an organic, living, spiritual universe began to be replaced by a world of scientific and technological achievements. American social planners brought from the hard sciences the perspective

promoted by Descartes that we should "reject all knowledge which is merely probable and judge only those things should be believed which are perfectly known and about which there can be no doubts" (in Capra, 1983: 57).

By the 19th century the search had begun to find what planners believed would be a singular, objective, universal standard for literacy and a set of laws which governed it. It was assumed that literacy reflected a series of discrete, cognitive skills which could eventually be isolated, taught, tested for and controlled (Street, 1984). Such objective and impartial measures would raise literacy above the concerns of moral dispute and political prejudice. As early as World War I, when it became clear that many military recruits could not read and write, the new tool of psychometric testing began to be used to determine who was and wasn't up to an external standard (Fingeret & Jurmo, 1989). Less able readers, who might exhibit "unscientific behavior" and be more vulnerable to propaganda, were for the first time scientifically identified. In the succeeding years, the literacy skills of adults have been measured by various kinds of external standards, including tests equated to school grade level equivalencies and later, to adult functional competency tasks (Northcutt, 1975). While such measures have provided indicators for planning at the macro level, often test scores were misunderstood as indicators of cognitive processes. Literacy, measured in this way, was mistakenly believed to and to have direct consequences for personal, social and economic growth (Street, 1984).

Onto the old layers of social meanings associated with illiteracy were added new ones. The scientific model led to a tendency to see illiterate adults as blank slates, requiring the "treatment" of literacy. "The mind of an illiterate person is like an unplanted seed. Inside the shell, there is the germ of life waiting to be awakened and quickened" said one author of the period (Wallace, 1965, cited in Fingeret & Jurmo, 1989:10). It was suggested that literacy itself might affect cognitive processes by facilitating abstract, analytical, rational and detached thinking (c.f. Goody and Watt, 1963; Havelock, 1976; Olson, 1977 cited in Street, 1984). Increasingly, the common sense knowledge adults acquired from experience

was devalued. Illiterate adults were further marginalized by the social stigma attributed to them as individuals somehow unable to participate effectively in society as workers, citizens and parents. Many, as this study shows, internalized those stigmas. And, they became yet another, subtle means of for exerting social control and marginalizing persons from poor, minority and working class backgrounds.

In recent years, however, our understanding of the subject of literacy has been changing. One direction for change has from the within the research community. Citing the failure of traditional scientific research to provide us with complete knowledge of human behavior, alternative researchers revived Kant's premise that a priori knowledge precedes any understanding of empirical data. They questioned the view that there was an autonomous social reality "out there" waiting to be studied. Instead, they saw the assumptions, definitions and conceptions which structure human experience as socially constructed. Turning their attention to the subjective, interpretive meaning of social action, they began to examine those interactions and negotiations in social situations through which people reciprocally define behavior. The task of the social scientist, they argued, should be to uncover "constitutive meanings" that account for behaviors and how they are patterned rather than to search for objectively determined "facts" of human behavior (Fay, 1979).

Over the past two or three decades, researchers who study language have been perhaps among those most disillusioned with the traditional research paradigm. During the sixties they began to move out of experimental laboratories and into more natural settings. Researchers in such diverse and interrelated fields as linguistics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, history and literary theory began to look at communication as it takes place in everyday practices and within dynamic social and historical contexts. Anthropologist John Szwed, for example, challenged the view that there could be found an objective standard for literacy. The assumption that literacy is simply a matter of skills of reading and writing, he proposed, does not even begin to approach the more fundamental problem: "What are reading and writing for?" (1981: 14). Rather than a single continuum from reader to non-

reader he suggested that there exists instead a plurality of literacies determined by ethnicity, age, sex, socioeconomic class and other variations of social context. Historian Harvey Graff (1987) studied literacy in nineteenth century Canada to expose the myth that literacy leads to increased democracy, wealth or better jobs. Arguing against the presentation of literacy as neutral, rather he found it linked to social control by ruling groups and to continuing social stratification. In their study of literacy in the Vai culture of Africa, psychologists Scribner and Cole (1978) found that the effect of literacy on cognitive processes depended on the kinds of literacy activities in which people engaged, whether it be negotiating a business deal or reading the Koran, rather than being inherent in literacy itself.

This growing body of inquiry led many researchers to the realization that literacy could only be known to them in forms which already have political and ideological significance. The meaning of literacy depends, they saw, on the social institutions in which it is embedded. Meaning is constructed out of the processes by which literacy is learned and practiced and cannot be isolated from its context (Street, 1984). They began to see the need for the study of discursive practices "real actions in a social world comprised of roles and relationships that determine the uses and limits of reading and writing as situated actions" (Robinson, 1990:6). New definitions for literacy emerged, such as the one here developed by James Boyd White:

> Literacy is not merely the capacity to understand the conceptual content of writings and utterances, but the ability to participate fully in a set of social and intellectual practices. It is not passive, but active; not imitative but creative, for participation in the speaking and writing of language is participation in the activities that make it possible. Indeed it involves a perpetual remaking of both language and practice. (Robinson, 1990: 158)

As we will see in this study, as researchers looked more closely at literacy in specific communities they began to formulate new questions related to relationships between literacy, knowledge and power. Anthropologist Brian Street challenged the literacy research community not only to look more closely at literacy practices but also to investigate how knowledge claims about literacy are made. What is the impact of literacy on how people

form their identity and sense of personhood? Who within a given context has the power to name and define some things as literacy and others as not literacy? How did that particular group gain authority over a certain version of reality? (Street, 1989).

Such questions imply new processes for research. They indicate a need to critically examine the assumptions behind the literature about literacy which currently exists and how public images of illiterate adults have been constructed and distorted. But, the development of a richer conceptual framework for understanding literacy development also implies the need to involve literacy learners in the examination of the "cultural scripts" they bring to and take from learning. As Susan Lytle points out, we need to know "their family, school and community histories; their specific and global intentions; their successful experiences learning and teaching in other facets of their lives; their knowledge of the world; and in particular their tacit and shifting awareness of the forms and functions of written language as experienced in the contexts of daily life" (1990: 4). Conceptual frameworks for such research must take into account complex and interrelated dimensions, they must also explore new ways to involve those being researched in the construction and interpretation of knowledge. We are only beginning to explore such a process of mutual inquiry.

Within the field of adult literacy we are now beginning to recognize how little we know about the process of becoming literate from the perspective of adult learners. Research in adult literacy has been intermittent and underfunded (Newman & Beverstock, 1990) and dominated by topics which fit within the framework of more traditional quantitative research. Although increasingly literacy advocates are calling for participatory practices that encourage self-reliance, self-determination, dignity and self-confidence (International Literacy Year Task Force on Literacy, 1990; Fingeret & Jurmo, 1990, Laubach Literacy Action, 1990) researchers still have little to offer practitioners in this regard. We have had few opportunities to systematically examine the social contexts of adult literacy learning in or outside the classroom.

The Problem

In a small but growing number of literacy programs across our country, adult beginning readers have started to write, publish their stories and read texts written by other learners as an integral part of their educational curriculum. This trend has been a grassroots movement, initiated by teachers primarily in small local programs. In the past few years the practice has spread to community-based, volunteer and institutional programs throughout the United States. Teachers, eager for ways to implement more learner-centered approaches to literacy instruction and for more appropriate reading materials for their students, have learned about writing and publishing from varied sources. Some of those who were among the first to use writing and publishing were influenced by the notion of problem-posing education popularized by Paulo Freire (1970). Others learned about writing through publications produced by community and worker writing projects within literacy schemes in England and Canada. Women's writing collectives and oral history projects among African American and immigrant groups have provided models for others. More recently, teachers have also been influenced by new research related to the writing process and by its applications in classrooms with children, such as those associated with the National Writing Project .

Through trial and error, teachers have adapted what they have learned to their own contexts. Writing in their programs has taken the form of dictated language experience stories, dialogue journals, letter writing projects, writing workshops and community projects. Authors have written life stories, articles of opinion, poems, video scripts, photonovelas and plays. Many are published in newsletters and small booklets for the authors' families, friends and fellow students to read. In a few cases books and magazines have been professionally published and sold to wider audiences.

My own interest in this phenomenon began four years ago when I interrupted my graduate program to start a small library-based literacy program for beginning readers in Springfield, Massachusetts. The program was funded to try out a new computer-based

curriculum which had as one of its objectives the involvement of learners in personal writing. The curriculum, however, contained few concrete guidelines for how to implement such a process. When it was time for the writing phase of the program, my co-teacher and I had to scramble to learn what we could about how to teach writing. Although we were unsure whether our students, many of whom could just barely get down their names and addresses, would be able to write, soon their desire to tell their stories overwhelmed our reservations and theirs. Students began to choose their own topics for writing, to use invented spelling to produce drafts, to revise and to work with us to edit their stories. Many began to use writing to remember and reconstruct difficult memories and to celebrate turning points in their lives. Soon writing became central to our work with students.

Our experiences prompted me to want to know more about what others within adult literacy were doing with writing. Informally I began to contact programs around the country and to write away for materials from England and Canada. I was soon disheartened to learn how little is known about the use of the writing process with adult beginning readers. Although this trend appears to be spreading, few of those who are developing innovative practices have had the time or resources to examine or share their work. Only a few local programs have found the funds and time to produce and distribute handbooks and how-to manuals. A handful of others have written short reports of their work in program newsletters and in introductions to the learner publications. Some literacy scholars have made a case for the use of writing (Kazemek, 1983; Padak & Padak, 1988) and one or two have described individual experiences within a theoretical framework (Elasser & John Steiner, 1977; Martin, 1989). Yet, to date, most programs are isolated from knowledge not only of theory but also of practice. No comprehensive collection of learner-written material exists, nor have descriptive studies of the history, nature or implications of this phenomenon been undertaken.

After two years I stopped teaching in order to devote full time to the research that was to become this study. I began to learn about studies of the writing process with other

populations: children, college students, workers and proficient adult writers. In the process I discovered writing researchers, too, had an interest in knowing about the role of writing in the lives of adult beginning readers. In a study of the history of writing research, for example, Freedman and her colleagues pointed out that:

> Little is known about the cognitive and social consequences of not learning to read and write as a child. We believe it is important to pay special attention to this population which may hold clues to the consequences of literacy and illiteracy... In studies of how adults learn to write (and read) we suggest considering variables such as the sociocultural histories of the learners, their previous education and the role of literacy in their everyday lives. (1987:20)

A study of the writing and publishing processes of adult beginning readers seemed to hold the promise of being useful not only because its history had yet to be documented. The written texts and the process of revising and producing them, I reasoned, might have provided a context through which adult beginning readers might have examined their lives and purposes for literacy. For this reason they might provide a unique window through which to see the life histories of adult learners and perhaps how their beliefs had been socially constructed through interactions with schools, families and communities.

The Purpose of the Study

The broad purpose of this study, then, is to begin an exploration of the nature of writing and publishing by adult beginning readers in the United States and its potential value to authors. The field study consists of two phases. The first phase intends to set the study in an historical context by gathering together what information exists about the history of writing and publishing in the United States: how projects got started, how they are organized and the kinds of publications they produce. The experiences of writing groups in England and Canada and their influence on U.S.-based projects is also investigated. Data for this portion of the research is based on documents published by literacy programs, the collection and analysis of learner-written texts and interviews with practitioners in the field.

The second and central phase of the research involves a qualitative study of the experiences of authors in three adult literacy programs. During in-depth interviews I asked eighteen authors to describe their life histories with respect to literacy and how they had changed as a result of becoming an author. Specific indicators of change included: authors' purposes for writing, their audiences, their beliefs and self-concept in relationship to literacy, learning and knowledge, their beliefs about writing and how it is learned, their perceptions of how their everyday literacy practices had changed and their plans for the future. I also analyzed factors which influenced these changes, including aspects of the writing context, people in the authors' lives who helped or got in the way of their literacy acquisition and personal obstacles to change. The data is presented in two ways. First six of the authors' stories are presented as short life history narratives. Then, I analyze patterns I observed in relation to the eighteen authors' purposes, audiences and outcomes of authorship.

The study then considers the wider implications of writing and publishing by adult beginning readers. I reflect on the potential value of publishing as a means for adult beginning readers to gain visibility, overcome stereotypes, and engage in a discourse with one another. Obstacles such as limited funding and censorship are also considered. Finally, I identify what I believe to be central issues and constraints adult literacy practitioners and policy makers need to consider and possible directions for further research.

Design and Methodology

Review of the Literature and Collection of Texts

The first phase of this research began with a review of the published and unpublished literature to ascertain the scope of writing and publishing with this population and its history. As mentioned, little information about this topic is available from scholarly journals. A literature search did reveal a limited number of teacher handbooks, reports and

learner-written materials, particularly in England and Canada where they are distributed through commercial presses. In the United States, however, such materials were less readily accessible. Finding out about them required contacting literacy practitioners directly and going to the few clearinghouses that exist for literacy.

In the early stages of the study, I interviewed twenty-five expert practitioners in New York City, Boston, Western Massachusetts, Philadelphia and Washington D.C., including representatives at the U.S. Department of Education, the Business Council for Effective Literacy and two major literacy libraries--the Adult Literacy Resource Institute in Boston and the Literacy Assistance Center in New York City. Based on the information they provided, I began to write to programs around the country who they believed might be involved in writing and publishing, asking them to send me information about their work and copies of student-written texts. In the case of states where I did not know of any programs, I wrote to state literacy contacts, some of which were able to respond. This survey is by no means exhaustive. Although a more complete collection would be valuable to the field, my purpose was more to get a general idea of the scope of activities in field than to produce a comprehensive bibliography. The existing survey does, however, provide some indication of the range of activities which now take place. (An annotated bibliography describing the programs I identified and their publications can be found in Appendix F.)

Selection of Sites and Authors

From among these programs several potential sites for further study were identified and contacted. Three (which were within a small enough geographical region to allow for relatively easy access) were eventually selected to participate. The Adult Basic Education program in the rural town of Bristol, Vermont has traditionally used one-to-one home tutors for literacy instruction. Two years ago, with a special grant, beginning readers there began to meet as a group to write and publish Opening Doors Books, which have been sold around

the country. The Publishing for Literacy Project in Boston is made up of authors from community-based programs around this culturally diverse urban area. Beginning readers on the Editorial Committee work with new authors to publish their work in their journal Need I Say More, attend writing weekends and participate in other group activities. The Read/ Write/Now Program in Springfield, Massachusetts is a small, library-based literacy program with beginning readers from around the city. Students write and produce newsletters and in-house books as one part of their work in the program.

The programs were chosen both for their diversity and because they met several common criteria. First, I was looking for programs in which there were learners who felt they were successfully becoming authors. I was in some respects looking not for average authors or programs, but for examples of those which were most effective in using the writing process with beginning readers. I looked for teachers with experience, insight and willingness to collaborate with me and with the authors in the research process. Beginning at Read/Write/Now, where I had previously been a teacher, I looked for teachers and authors who could provide me with advice and feedback throughout the project. Each author in this study could be characterized as a beginning reader. As you will see, most began the program experiencing difficulty reading simple texts or writing, for example, a basic letter. Abilities ranged from those who entered the program just barely able to write their names, to those who now, after one or two years of instruction, are almost ready to begin a program aim toward passing the high school equivalency test. Although some of the authors' mother tongues were not English, all of them are fluent enough to learn to read and write in classes with native speakers of English. In each case, the individuals selected had "published" their work, whether it was through small in-house newsletters or for wider distribution.

The eighteen authors were chosen in consultation with their teachers. As it turned out all of the authors had attended literacy classes for from one and a half to four years. The youngest author studied was 29 and the oldest was 55, with the average age of 42. They came from many backgrounds. Two were Puerto Rican, one was Jamaican, three had

come to the United States from Italy, six were African Americans and six were Caucasian native speakers of English. Eleven were women and seven were men. (More detailed demographic characteristics can be found in the Appendix.)

In-Depth Interviews and Analysis

Given that the purpose of this study was to obtain the authors own subjective perspectives and interpretations with respect to writing and publishing the research required a qualitative research methodology. My approach to the research process drew upon qualitative design and interviewing guidelines elaborated by, among others, Bogden & Biklen, 1982; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Mischler, 1986; Seidman, 1990; Patton, 1980 and Spradley, 1979, and in particular on the perspectives of phenomenology and symbolic interactionism. An initial set of guiding questions for the interviews was developed and modified as the research progressed. The data collected were descriptive and analyzed inductively.

Each of the first set of interviews was about two hours long and took place most often in authors' homes or classrooms. Most of my questions were open-ended, giving the authors a chance to elaborate their life stories in their own way and to use the opportunity not only to provide me with information but also to make sense of their own experience (Mischler, 1986). I asked each author to bring with them copies of their writing. We often read the pieces together, placing them in chronological order and discussing their purposes, audiences and other aspects of the writing process. After the first set of interviews with authors, I also interviewed their teachers, asking them to clarify what the authors had told me, to tell me more about the contexts in which the writing had taken place, and to give me their impressions of the authors experiences. I also collected from them materials about their programs and sometimes additional writing samples.

Each interview with the authors had been taped and was later transcribed and analyzed. As I read and reread the first set of transcripts, I tried to consider how I might return the data and my analysis to the authors for their verification and interpretation. By then it had become clear that the authors often made sense and order of their experience in the form of narrative. So I decided to try writing up some of the data in narrative form. I wrote nine narratives and sent them, or the transcripts, back to the authors and sometimes their teachers for further comments. In six cases I was able to go back for a second interview with the authors and in one or two cases, a third. Based on the suggestion of one of the authors, I also wrote letters to the participants of the study, to ask them further questions and also to provide them with an opportunity to practice their literacy. Two or three of the authors and I began a correspondence, pieces of which appear in this study. A draft of the final version of the study was also sent to key participants for comments.

As the research progressed, the case for including some of the narratives as an integral part of the study became more and more compelling. Narrative approaches to inquiry, I learned, are increasingly being used in studies of educational experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Bruner, 1986) to capture ways of knowing which are too often strained out of traditional reporting of data. In a field where too often learners are portrayed in homogenized or distorted images, narratives, I saw, might reveal to the readers both the particularity and diversity among these beginning readers. From among the authors, I chose six stories to be reported as narratives and to precede the analysis chapters. I hope they will help the reader to get a better understanding of the authors' stories in a form that is closer to how they might tell them, with the internal logic and cause and effect relationships intact.

Organization

This study is organized into eight chapters. The next chapter reviews studies in adult literacy education, in the social context of literacy and in the field of writing which, taken

together, provide a basis for the study. Chapter Three consists of a descriptive historical analysis tracing the roots of writing and publishing by beginning readers in programs in the U.S. and the influence of programs in England and Canada. In Chapter Four the three sites of the study are briefly described, along with some elements of instruction common to all the sites. Chapter Five contains the narratives of the lives of six of the authors. Using information gathered from interviews with all eighteen authors, Chapter Six analyzes authors' purposes and audiences for writing and changes authors described as resulting from becoming a writer. Chapter Seven looks at the potential value of the writing of adult beginning readers from a wider cultural perspective and analyzes factors which inhibit its growth and development, including funding, teaching and censorship constraints. And, finally, Chapter Eight concludes with a summary of the findings and implications for researchers, practitioners and policy makers.

CHAPTER II

FOUNDATIONS FOR STUDYING THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF WRITING IN ADULT LITERACY

This chapter provides an overview of those studies which have been most influential in the development of the framework for this research. It begins by looking at what researchers have learned about the conceptions and practices of adult literacy learners within the framework of literacy education and then at how ethnographic studies have begun to enrich our understanding of the functions and uses of literacy within communities. Following that we will examine more closely how writing researchers have begun to conceptualize and study processes and contexts related to learning to write and how these conceptual frameworks can help us to understand adult beginning readers who become authors.

Surveys of Adult Literacy

In the early seventies, several researchers began to direct their attention toward a more comprehensive study of adult literacy as it existed in practice. A seminal study of the period was conducted by Jack Mezirow, Gorden Darkenwald and Alan Knox (Last Gamble on Education, 1975). Using both survey methods and qualitative interviews, they studied programs in six urban areas. They found that literacy instruction was for the most part a "loner's game" with students isolated from one another. Approaches to teaching and learning were limited, often focused entirely on drill, recitation and testing to prepare for the high school equivalency test. Rarely was time available to give beginners individual attention. Teachers and administrators were judged not on the quality of the programs but on attendance. As a result, in many classrooms, interactions centered around alternately begging students to attend classes or threatening them when they didn't. Due in part to such constraints, adult basic education was a "creaming operation," selecting those most ready to

learn. Although they found students were not a homogenous group, little was known about the motivations or deterrents to learning or the outcomes of participation.

Much of the funded research to learn about literacy learners in the years that followed came in the form of surveys. An early broad qualitative study was undertaken by Charnley and Jones (1979) to find out what constituted "success" among participants of the Adult Literacy Campaign across Great Britain. They concluded that:

> . . . progress in literacy is bound up with the growth of the student's self confidence--not simply confidence in his ability to learn, although that is part of it, but rather confidence in the assertion of his intentions and in the contemplation of the self in making the assertion. Such confidence is preliminary to any progress in reading and writing skills. (1979: 19)

Discovering ways to measure the outcomes of participation in literacy programs from the perspective of learners is problematic, as Darkenwald and Valentine (1985) found in their attempt to design such a study. Respondent attrition, low response rates, difficulty in attributing changes to education, and narrow range of outcomes were all cited as problems with previous research. In an effort to build the basis for further research, they conducted a series of phone surveys asking open-ended questions to look for intended and unintended outcomes. Their findings reiterated those of Charnley and Jones. When asked the single most important benefit of literacy instruction, over half of their sample cited affective reasons - feeling better about themselves, having more control over their lives - as the primary benefit.

Researchers within this tradition have also sought to explore what deters learners from participation, looking beyond that notion that learners don't participate simply because they are unmotivated. Elisabeth Hayes, for example, recently created a typology which she hopes will provide a "comprehensive way to view systematic differences in groups of low-literate adults" (Hayes, 1988:1). Using a disjoint cluster analysis procedure she analyzed the responses of 160 students according to variables such as low self-confidence, social disapproval, situational (and economic) barriers, negative attitudes toward classes and a low personality profile. The results of this sophisticated analysis showed that adults were not a

homogenous group. Rather she identified six types of "low literate" adults based on their scores on the five deterrent factors, implying that adults should not be treated as a homogenous group.

Other studies, including a recent one undertaken by Beder and Valentine (1990), have also looked at learners' motivational patterns These researchers used factor analysis based on in-depth interviews, background data and tests of cognitive ability and academic achievement to determine motivational profiles of over three thousand adult basic education students across the state of Iowa. Motivation, they found goes well beyond the simple desire to improve basic skills or get a high school diploma. They found that the category of self-improvement (feeling better about oneself, being more intelligent, having more control over one's life, etc.) was a highly cited motivator. Learners also frequently cited factors such as family responsibilities, community/church involvement, and launching (getting ready to be married, have children, move) as well as job advancement and economic need as motivators. They also mentioned social motivators such as the desire for diversion and the "urging of others". As in Hayes' study, these researchers used a cluster analysis to capture the diversity of various subgroups of learners, looking at these findings from the perspective of six clusters: mainstream women; those who were urged to attend classes by others; young adults; older, more affluent "climbers"; the least affluent and least employed; and low ability strivers.

Literacy education, Beder and Valentine found, is much more than an instrumental activity whereby skills are acquired. Rather, their empirical findings suggest that it is:

> a) a symbolic activity whereby learners internalized and perhaps socially enforced feelings of inadequacy are expunged, and b) a vestibule activity, a necessary and logical first step, which, once undertaken, enables participants - both logistically and psychologically - to make changes in their lives.(1990: 79)

The Need to Look Deeper

While the data uncovered in these studies does much to expand our notion of literacy education, many researchers (for example, Street, 1988; Fingeret, 1989; Hunter and Harman, 1979) reflect that they build upon too narrow a range of assumptions about the kinds of literacy education that already exists rather than looking more deeply at how such views are socially constructed. What gives rise to how adult beginning readers interpret their motivations, barriers to participation and outcomes? How do they reflect underlying social and economic inequalities? How might they be seen within the broader framework of the cultural context and everyday practices of adults outside the classroom? How does such research maintain or seek to alter existing relationships of unequal power?

One seminal study which brought these questions to light was Hunter and Harman's Adult Illiteracy in the United States (1979). After an exhaustive national study, they provided empirical evidence of the links between illiteracy, poverty and minority status. Those who were most marginalized economically and socially rarely participated in literacy programs to begin with. Their needs and interests, they found, were poorly understood and mostly ignored by programs, which only currently served four percent of the eligible population. More programs, based on the present model, they said, would not make the problem go away because they do not address the root causes of illiteracy: why and how such adults are excluded from the wider economic and social benefits of society.

> It is my conviction that the majority of people included in these statistics never see their reading levels as the most significant fact about themselves. Nor will they ever remain in programs like most of those currently available. . . . Literacy skills may be an important component for their future well-being but their diagnoses of needs--not ours-- should be the basis for program development. (Hunter,1987:2)

Hunter and Harman drew on the philosophies of Freire (1970) and other critical educators who illuminated how people are excluded from power within a "culture of silence." To become truly literate, such educators emphasized, people must engage in the essential process of dialogue, naming the word and simultaneously through it "reading the world." It

is through dialogue that people can begin to recognize and reflect on issues that constrain their lives and believe that their actions have the power to transform them (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1988).

Studies such as theirs made researchers more conscious of the gap between the findings of their studies and policies that affect the welfare of people they study. Kenneth Levine, in an article entitled "Functional Literacy: Fond Hopes and False Economies" (1982) illustrated how public notions of functional literacy create the illusion that relatively low standards of achievement will directly result in a set of universally desired outcomes such as employment and social integration. Fingeret (1988) further pointed out how in recent years, with increased funding for literacy tied to employment or pre-employment training, the perspective that economic efficiency is the only legitimate rationale for literacy work has gained currency, sometimes to the extent of displacing economic issues onto literacy. This trend, she says, leads policy makers to look for short-term "cost-benefits" related to how the projects they fund will translate into less absenteeism, higher profits and so on.

"A reduction of complexity," says Mike Rose, "has great appeal in institutional decision making, especially in difficult times" (1985: 342). But such a view denies the fuller participation of the learners themselves and a deeper understanding of how they might use literacy to achieve their own ends.

Researching Literacy within Communities

Although many educators were beginning to reject conceptions of literacy and literacy education that reduced its complexity, the means to conduct research which might replace it remains problematic. One important direction has come from various kinds of ethnographic research which has been conducted within communities.

In one the most well known studies of this kind, Shirley Brice Heath (1983) spent nearly a decade in three communities in the Carolinas. She studied the types and uses of

literacy in a white working class community, an African American working class community and a middle class community made up of members of both races. Her description and analysis showed that literacy events in those communities were essentially social and demonstrated the strong links between oral and literate traditions. Her study pointed to how the varied uses of literacy within working class communities were incongruent from those learned and taught in school and to the need for schools to build better bridges between home and school literacies.

Heath's work was, in part, the basis for many other studies in the community. Denny Taylor, for example, used a similar model to analyze family literacy within white middle-class homes (1983). Later, she and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) studied families of Shay Avenue, a low-income, African American community and compared the data on types and uses of literacy they found there with Heath's study and with Taylor's previous work. Their study began to reveal the rich array of types and uses of reading and writing found within communities, categories which were very different from those found in school. For example, among the types and uses of writing they found were writing as a substitute for oral messages, for example letters to schools and notes left for family members; writing as a means of meeting social-interactional purposes, as in thank you notes, greeting cards, letters, and helping children with homework; writing as a memory aid, as in grocery lists, recipes records, lists of phone numbers and addresses and records on calendars; financial writing such as checks, bills catalog orders, budgets and records of expenditures; public-records types and uses of writing such as church bulletins and committee reports; expository writing such as reports for college and school; instrumental writing such as filling out forms and writing schedules; autobiographical writing such at letters written to oneself in difficult times, journals and information about children; recreational writing such as crossword puzzles and letters; creative writing such as poetry and painting with children; other educational writing such as practicing shorthand, typing and writing down lines from poems; work-related

writing such as filling in job applications and writing resumes and environmental types and uses of writing as in the example of an individual who designed and painted signs.

Steven Reder and his colleagues (1987) have also used an ethnographic approach to describe and compare literacy in Hmong, Eskimo and Hispanic communities. When they asked community members to tell them about the social organization, roles and status of given writing practices they found that literacy could best be described as a collaborative practice. Some people might be technologically engaged in a practice by doing the actual writing. Others might be functionally engaged by providing specialized knowledge or expertise and yet others might be socially engaged by knowing about the implications of the writing event for the life of the community. Many of the most successful workers, parents and community leaders were not literate; however their functional knowledge and knowledge of social meanings were often vital to literacy related tasks. This work, he suggests, has implications for literacy education which is often considered a solitary activity, ignoring the interdependency and potentials for collaboration that exist within communities.

In her work with Hmong adults living in Philadelphia, Gail Weinstein-Shr (1986) also examined the use and meanings of literacy in relation to kinship structures and adaptations to a new community. She found two very different patterns of literacy practice. One woman who came through an adult literacy program became a gatekeeper for literacy practices in the community. Another man, who appeared to be a failure by educational standards practiced another non-school form of literacy by keeping a book about what it is to be Hmong, a literacy practice which was valued and shared among the community. Like Reder, she found that families divide their language and literacy labor. Within the social network literacy doesn't have to be a skill possessed by every individual. Other researchers in this tradition are McLaughlin (1985) who studied the functions of English and Navajo literacy in two communities and de Avila (1983) who investigated the exchange system between illiterate Spanish speaking adults and readers.

Other ethnographic studies, as Brian Street (1988) points out, have focused more closely on ways in which literacy is socially constructed. In rural Mexico, for example, King (in press) discovered there was no stigma attached to illiteracy in the Indian community, but there was among mestizos who aspired to life in the city. Niko Besnier (1989) found that while in our culture writing is associated with a lack of affect and with decontextualized knowledge, villagers in the Pacific area he studied were self-effacing and did not display emotion in face-to-face encounters, but in letter writing and in sermons it was considered it appropriate to display a good deal of emotion and to "show off."

Another group of researchers have used in-depth interviews or case studies to investigate the meanings of literacy and illiteracy for individuals. Hanna Fingeret (1982) in her dissertation The Illiterate Underclass: Demythologizing an American Stigma, for example, conducted in-depth interviews with forty adults living in an American urban area. She too found what was at the time considered surprising: that many adults in the U.S. did not see the need for literacy for themselves as individuals, since it was available to them from others within their social network. Many saw literacy as one skill among many that could be reciprocated. A seamstress, for example, might exchange her technical skills for those of a friend who could help her write down a recipe; a businessman might record letters on a tape recorder for a secretary to type. Many felt the most damaging effect of not being able to read was not the lack of reading and writing skills but the stigmas attached to it by society. Similar to Heath and Hunter, she proposed that we think of adults who do not read as members of functioning members of oral subcultures, rather than nonfunctioning members of the dominant literate culture.

> The oral subculture is rooted in concrete experience. . . . This fundamental cultural characteristic is at odds with the prevailing assumption that nonreading adults are socially isolated, alienated, and inarticulate. It suggests that interaction is central to daily life but that it follows "rules" that are different from the rules of the classroom. Students are often made to feel that their culture does not support literacy development, and their rich patterns of social interaction are not viewed as resources appropriate to the instructional setting. (1989:11)

Fingeret further reflected that "just as the power of literacy to transform cultural perspectives has been overstated, so, too, must the power of illiteracy to define cultural perspectives be downgraded" (1983: 6). The stigmas associating illiteracy with incompetence, she said, are reflections of biases within the literate community and serve to obscure the inherent dignity of all adults.

While research in communities from a broader socio-contextual perspective is growing, only a few in-depth studies with learners who are enrolled or might enroll in literacy classes have been undertaken from this perspective (Johnson, 1985; Gambrell and Heathington, 1981; Mikulecky and Ehlinger, 1986). In 1985 Peter Johnson challenged the literacy research community for their lack of support for ethnographic fieldwork and case studies. He admonished those in his field with the fact that Reading Research Quarterly, a major research journal in the field, "has not published a single case study in its entire history" (1985: 155). Johnson's own case study research, based on interviews with three male learners found that their limited conceptual understanding of what reading is, their deeply ingrained strategies for getting around reading, their anxiety and their self-attributions of inability to learn were the most significant block to learning, a fact obscured by a more traditional emphasis on disabilities as neurological and processing deficits (1985).

In other studies, Whiton (1989) traced the impact of community on people enrolled in one adult literacy program and found that discontinuities within the teacher and student group affected learning, often creating conditions in which learners reverted back to previous coping strategies, such as those mentioned by Johnson. Auerbach (1989) found defining family literacy as school like activities practiced in the home created obstacles to integrating learning with daily life.

Yet others have looked at the relationship between gender and literacy acquisition. When Kathleen Rockwell collected life histories of women in a Los Angeles Hispanic community, she found that the women saw literacy instruction as both a threat and a desire. In spite of their desire to go to school to learn English and literacy "they do not think of

literacy as a right for themselves, but for their husbands and their children" (1987: 328). Even when these women did engage in literacy practices within the home, they were more willing to see men, who used literacy in the public sphere, as literate and themselves as illiterate. Men in their lives often opposed their attending classes, sometimes with violence; they were more likely to advance their literacy skills when they were separated or divorced. Jenny Horsman (1987) also conducted in-depth interviews, in this case with Canadian women in the Maritimes who were enrolled as literacy students. She found these women often attended literacy classes not so much to learn functional skills as to find meaning in their lives and for the connection with others which it offered them. Many women also cited enhancing the quality of their children's lives, rather than their own, as a key purpose for education. As in Rockwell's study, she found that the decision to participate in classes was strongly influenced by the hostility or support of their spouses.

Linking Conceptions and Practices in Literacy Classrooms

While these studies provide us with keen insights into the lives of learners, as yet we still lack frameworks for understanding literacy in adulthood, and especially for studying how learning in the classroom interacts with everyday life. Over the past several years Susan Lytle and her colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania have been in the process of trying to generate such a framework (Lytle, 1990). They began their Adult Literacy Development Project as a short term longitudinal study of adults in collaboration with the Center for Literacy, a large not-for-profit literacy program in Philadelphia. Although their original focus was on designing and using alternative procedures for assessing literacy, over time the project has evolved toward the broader goal of the development of a more comprehensive study of the interacting dimensions of beliefs, practices, processes and plans with respect to literacy and learning in the lives of adult learners. Working with teachers, tutors and learners, the researchers are trying to make the process itself collaborative, integrally

involving teachers, tutors and learners "together collecting, analyzing and interpreting data with and about adult learners engaged in tutoring dyads and/or classes" (1990:14).

Drawing on a complex understanding of literacy and on the work of many researchers mentioned here, this study sees adult learners "own evolving conceptual frameworks or theories about language, literacy, teaching and learning" (1990: 15) at the heart of their research:

> The work so far suggests that adults' beliefs may function as the core or critical dimension in their movement toward enhanced literacy. As beliefs are articulated and sometimes restructured through interactions with teachers, texts and other learners, the other dimensions of development--adults practices, processes, goals and plans--begin to reflect and then in turn inform thesechanges. Although these developmental processes appear to be reciprocal and recursive, there is evidence that beliefs may be a primary source of other dimensions of growth. (1990: 16)

In this study the researchers hope to have the opportunity not just to look at the learners' prior experiences and beliefs, but also how they change over time. They hope that they can address learner's everyday literacy activities as well as the way they manage "reading and writing tasks and the products of these transactions" (1990: 15) by studying their classroom activities in some detail. And, they want to find out about adults' long and short term goals and how they plan to attain them. Some of these dimensions will be considered in more detail later in this study.

Recent Trends in the Study of Writing

Although studies like that of Lytle and her colleagues promise to inform us not only about reading in the classroom but also about writing, as yet within adult literacy research little is known about beliefs, practices, processes or plans specifically associated with writing. As mentioned earlier, some researchers (Kazemek, 1983; Elasser, 1977) have elaborated theoretical basis for the teaching of writing. But, for the most part, we must look to

research being conducted with other populations of writers for models for studying writing in the social context. It is to these writing researchers which we will now turn our attention.

Like literacy researchers, those who studied writing also began to ask different kinds of questions and to take new approaches to answering them. Up to the late sixties researchers knew surprisingly little about how writing skills developed. Mostly they "compared the effectiveness of a variety of ad hoc instructional methods or concentrated on how best to evaluate the final product" (Freedman, 1987). It was believed that there was essentially one process of writing that served all writers for all their aims, modes, intents and audiences. Writers decided in advance what they would write and accomplished those ends primarily as solitary activity (Emig, 1983). Research in writing in general was scarce. Graves, for example, found that from 1955 to 1972 the funds for writing research came to less than one-tenth of one percent of all research funds for education (1984: 93). Most studies looked at what teachers did in the classroom; only twelve percent looked at what children did when they wrote (Graves, 1984: 93).

Janet Emig's (1971) case study, Composing Processes of 12th Grade Students, was one of the first to represent a the shift toward seeing writing as a process. In looking at procedures students followed as they wrote, Emig used multiple data sources, introduced a case study and "compose aloud" methodology and focussed on what the people were doing instead of their products. Many other qualitative studies which investigated the composing processes of both proficient writers and students followed.

Characterizing Writing: Britton's Influence

One early strand of this new research looked at how to characterize written texts and the developmental steps that led to them. In the United States Kinneavy (1971) began to elaborate a theory of discourse, emphasizing the underlying purposes or aims of communication. Moffett (1969) also began to consider discourse from the perspective of the

writer, developing a model based on increasing abstraction and decentering from the self outward as the learner grows and can handle more difficult forms of discourse. One of the landmark studies along these lines, The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18) (1975) was conducted by James Britton, Tony Burgess, Nancy Martin, Alex MacLeod and Harold Rosen in England. Britton, a former teacher himself, set out to examine writing as it existed not in theory but in practice, examining from 1967 to 1971 over 2100 writing scripts of school children aged eleven to eighteen. Since their model is important to the design of this study and illustrates how perspectives have evolved in this field, I will describe it here in more detail.

At the time Britton's team began to define their research task, there was nothing ready made to help them. In textbook after textbook they found the same four categories of narration, description, exposition and argument, which they traced back to the 18th century. Over the succeeding years these categories had become so much a part of our thinking they were accepted without question.

Like many language researchers during the period, Britton's team turned to research on speech. They drew on Sapir's theory that all speech is essentially expressive: that expressive language "signals the self, reflects not only the ebb and flow of a speaker's thought and feeling, but also his assumptions of shared context of meaning, and of a relationship of trust with his listener" (1975:11). When demands exist for a speaker to be more explicit or sometimes more formal, the speaker edits out some of the expressive features in order to communicate meaning. Expressive language, they reasoned represented an overlap between speech and writing. Developmentally it seemed to be the mode in which most children began and, since it was perhaps a more direct link to thinking, it might be important at any stage of development. From this, and research by linguists such as Jacobson and Hymes who had developed classifications for speech functions, they began to develop a three term conception of writing functions as communicative-expressive-poetic.

The group drew also drew an understanding of the dialectical relationship between thought and writing from the Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky (1962) suggested that inner speech is an independent linguistic function. As infants listen to those speaking around them and discover the value of talking to themselves about what they are doing. As this inner speech develops it becomes abbreviated and more meaningful. A single word can contain many threads of ideas, experiences and emotions. It represents, to some extent, pure meaning. Through developing this inner speech, the child builds a bridge between external language and thought. To transform inner speech to written text, children must consciously step outside their shorthand thoughts and mentally enter the social context they share with the reader. Once writers become fluent they hardly notice this process. But for the beginner, Britton's team inferred from this, the fewer the external demands and expectations, the more it is possible to make this transition and, in doing so, gain fluency in writing (1975:40).

Although they had originally hoped for a more comprehensive model, in the end they settled on two characteristics for their observation of writing, which they termed functions and audience. They labeled their functions transactional, expressive and poetic, with the expressive placed in the middle as the matrix out of which the other two functions grow. The transactional function was identified as language used to get things done, language concerned with an end outside itself. Such writing informed, advised, instructed or persuaded the readers. This function demanded accurate and specific reference to what is known about reality. The poetic function was described as a verbal construct, or patterned verbalization of the writer's feelings or ideas. This category included not only poems but stories, plays and even some kinds of autobiographical writing. Expressive language was seen as language closest to the self, revealing a close relationship to the reader and less explicit structure as in, for example, personal narratives, diaries and letters.

This concept was closely linked to the notion of audience. The audiences for the three functions run from an intimate audience associated with expressive writing toward more public audiences for both transactional and poetic writing. Drawing on George Mead's

concept of the development of a "generalized other" they posited that an important dimension in writing development would be a growing ability to make adjustments and choices to accommodate the audience for whom the writing was intended. A child must learn first to internalize a known and then a "generalized other" who speaks for society at large (1975:11). They subcategorized the audiences of the writing they examined into groups such as self, teacher (child to trusted adult, pupil to teacher, pupil to examiner), wider known audience (expert to laymen, child to peer group, group member to working group) and unknown audience or indiscernible audiences. Although Britton's team tried to identify one category as dominant, often they found scripts overlapped or fulfilled more than one category. And, they emphasized that within each function and audience category, writing can take different forms, from mature to immature depending on the developmental stage of the writer.

Britton's team was disappointed at the range of writing they found in schools. Nine-tenths of the scripts fell into the audience categories of teacher-learner dialogue and pupil-to-examiner. Only six percent of their sample was expressive writing. Sixty-three percent was in the transactional mode. Pressures to write at the analogic level with the main audience of teacher as examiner, the authors believed, were great enough to inhibit early expressive writing. In spite of their findings, however, Britton and his colleagues were able to present a compelling case for continued study of how writing is learned. Their findings were influential not only for researchers, but also for many practitioners who, over the next two decades, began to encourage new learners to write more frequently in the classroom and to use expressive writing as a learning tool.

Writing Researchers Look Deeper

While Britton and others made great strides in characterizing written texts, their work still relied only on the written product and did not consider the interpretations of the author or many social implications. In the years that followed, researchers became more aware first

that "into every act of knowing there enters a passionate contribution of the person knowing what is being known . . . this coefficient is no mere imperfection but a vital component of this knowledge" (Michael Polanyi, quoted in Emig, 1977: 89). They also realized, as Hymes pointed out, that, "Ultimately the functions served...must be derived directly from the purposes and needs of human persons engaged in social actions and what they are for: talking to seduce, to stay awake, to avoid a war" (1972: 70). They began to examine speech acts to ascertain the uses of language. Writing, like speech, could be used to get our material needs met, to change the behaviors or beliefs of others, to establish or reflect personal relationships, to express our perceptions of ourselves, to seek knowledge, express our imaginations, describe, criticize, establish agreement, record the past or just, simply, to have fun (Smith, 1982).

Researchers also came to see that not only is every individual capable of many different intentions simultaneously but that writing has potential for *creating* purposes, and for expanding thinking:

> Not only can a piece of writing communicate thought from writer to reader...but also the act of writing can tell the author things that were not known (or not known to be known) before the writing began. Thus we might build a boat to learn more about how boats are built, or climb a hill without knowing in advance the view that will be attained or even the route that we will be able to take. Writing can extend both our imagination and our understanding. (Smith, 1982:1)

Over time, writing researchers identified many ways in which writing possessed unique qualities as a tool for learning. Emig (1977) noted that writing is both personal and self-rhythmed. Applebee (1984) summarized other commonly cited features of writing as a tool:

> a) the permanence of written text, which allows writers to rethink and revise over time; b) the explicitness writing demands, if meaning is to exist beyond the context in which is was originally written; c) the resources provided by the conventional discourse forms, for organizing and thinking through new ideas and for making clear the relationships between them; d) the actively creative nature of writing, providing a medium for considering the implications of otherwise unexamined assumptions. (cited in Freedman, et.al., 1987: 29)

In doing so researchers became aware that looking at writing only as a cognitive process obscured many aspects of writing that were not peripheral (Cooper & Holzman, 1989). Jerome Bruner in speaking of the shift that took place in his own thinking, said he came to see that, "If one asks the question, where is the meaning of social concepts--in the world, in the meaner's head or in interpersonal negotiation, one is compelled to answer that it is the last of these" (1986: 122). He said:

> I have come increasingly to recognize that most learning in most settings is a communal activity, a sharing of culture. It is not just that the child must make his knowledge his own, but that he must make it his own in a community of those who share his sense of belonging to a culture. (1986: 127)

Bruner and others were strongly influenced in this respect by a second reading of Vygotsky and his student Luria, who illuminated the social construction of language. According to Vygotsky, "the history of the process of internalization of social speech is also the history of the socialization of the children's practical intellect" (1978: 27). The child grows by learning in collaboration with others. When an adult enters a dialogue with a child she provides the child with clues that allow him to achieve what he could not do alone. It is this "loan of consciousness" that allows a child to reach what Vygotsky called the "zone of proximal development," that is, "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under the guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (1978:86).

This experience, said Vygotsky, is internalized and seems private but is, in fact, social. A.L. Luria, Vygotsky's student, extended his teacher's work. Of special interest to adult educators is his study of how the social experiences of Russian agricultural workers shifting to a collectivized form of labor and participating in a cultural revolution also changed their social constructions (Elasser & John-Steiner, 1977). Peasants who had not participated on collective farms and in literacy classes, when asked about life beyond their village, answered:

> I can't imagine what to ask about...to ask you need knowledge and all we do is hoe the field.
>
> I don't know how to obtain knowledge...where would you find the questions? For questions you need knowledge. You can ask questions when you have understanding, but my head is empty.

But those who had participated in transformative, collective activities had many questions about their lives:

> How can life be made better? Why is the life of a worker better than that of a peasant? How can I acquire knowledge more readily? Why are city workers more skilled than peasants?
>
> Well, what could I do to make our kolkhozniks (members of collective farms) better people?...And then I'm interested in how the world exists, where things come from, how the rich become rich and why the poor are poor. (Luria, 1976 cited in Elasser & John-Steiner, 1977: 456-457)

Writing Research in Classrooms and Communities

Over the past decade issues researchers became more aware that "learning to write is not simply skill acquisition, but it is learning to enter into discourse communities which have their own rules and expectations (Freedman et.al., 1987). We have already seen how ethnographic researchers (Heath, 1983; Reder, 1987; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1989) began to identify the types and uses of writing in varied communities. Other researchers began to look at writing in workplace contexts. Odell, Gotswami, Herrington & Quick (1983) devised a procedure for examining the writing of workers in a large bureaucracy and obtaining their analysis of their reasons for writing as they did. They found attitudes and values of the organizational culture, prior circumstances, agency procedures and their perceptions of their readers within the organization all strongly influenced decision-making. Other researchers (Selzer, 1983; Faigley and Miller, 1982) found that the process of composing on the job entails a good deal of "communal brainstorming" and that people often have to write collaboratively (cited in Odell,1985 :250).

Much of the research into the social context of writing, however, has taken place within classrooms. Many of those most well known to teachers include detailed accounts of teachers' experiences implementing the writing process in classrooms (Graves, 1978; Calkins, 1982;; Atwell, 1984) or close examinations of their own writing processes (Murray, 1989). Teachers have begun to take a more active role in "reclaiming the classroom" and "seeing for themselves" by undertaking case studies of their work in the classroom (Goswami & Stillman, 1987; Bissex & Bullock, 1987). Some have undertaken narrative studies of how teachers construct their understanding of how to teach writing (Perl & Wilson, 1986).

As such studies proliferated, it became clear to some researchers that a more critical approach was needed. For example, those who studied college students who were labeled remedial, began to acknowledge the importance of looking more deeply at classroom and academic discourse to see how learners and teachers constructed their tasks and purposes differently. They especially looked at teachers' tendencies to look for students' deficits rather than their strengths and at how students' perceptions were shaped by their social backgrounds (Bartholomae, 1985; Bizzell, 1986; Hull & Rose, 1990; Fox, 1990). Florio and Clark (1982) began to look at how writing events in classrooms are socially structured. Bloome, (1986) using detailed case studies and analysis of classroom discourse, examined the uses of "mock participation" and "procedural displays" and how they supported or denied access to learning.

Classrooms, these researchers saw, were complex social sites "dependent on social structures and processes not only in their interpretive but also in their constructive phases" (Cooper & Holzman, 1989: 5). Within that, James Heap points out that the multiple dimensions of writing as social action in the classroom need to be further unpacked.

> Writing is social because one person, the writer, communicates with another person, or persons, the audience. The second social dimension of writing consists of the constraints on writer behavior--the rules, rights and responsibilities that surround writing in classrooms. The third dimension of sociality is based on the fact that a writer can orient to persons other than his or her audience during the course of writing. Other persons, their actions, and the

> outcomes of those actions are potentially consequential during the course of classroom writing. (1989:148)

With respect to audience, researchers began to acknowledge that writers "not only analyze or invent audiences, more significantly they communicate with and know their audiences" (Cooper, 1989: 11). As researchers began to develop a more complex view of audience, they recognized that audiences judge but also motivate writing, according to the experiences and expectations of the writer and the interactions in the classroom. It is possible, some projected, that only in highly structured writing activities do writers consciously focus on writing for a highly abstract audience (1989: 11).

Students relate to each other not only in terms of audience, but in other ways as well. We have always considered teachers and textbooks in the classroom equation, Heap points out, but we have less often acknowledged the way fellow students serve as resources or hindrances as well.

In general, we have underestimated the larger social group. A vital area of research relates to Heap's third dimension, that of classroom norms: the assignment given by the teacher, the motives of the student in completing the assignment, rules about how it is to be done, and the expectations of classroom membership. Some research of this nature has been undertaken in classrooms. Such studies are evident, for example, in articles written for the Modern Language Association in response to the presentations at their 1988 Right to Literacy Conference (Lunsford, Moglen & Slevin, 1990). John Lofty showed how his junior high school students in a Maine fishing community did not see the purpose of writing, had different constructions of time than those in the classroom and in general resisted writing. Miriam Camitta uncovered the rich use of vernacular writing by adolescents outside the classroom. Hull and Rose recreated the experiences of how one working class college student interpreted her tasks. Rothman showed how his students were silenced and censored in the classroom. Miller & Leigh investigated the unrecognized dimensions of collaborative oral speech within black folk culture and its implications for the teaching of writing.

In a related kind of study, Thomas Fox (1990) showed how asking students in his freshman college English class to analyze their own writing and classroom interactions opened up many conflicts related to classroom membership, the role of the teacher and the purpose of their class. When he was able to encourage students to explore dimensions of gender, class and race in their writing, new relationships became visible to them. One woman,for example, who refused to write about anything controversial and underestimated her intelligence and abilities in her writing began to name ways gender relations contributed to her beliefs and actions. A working class student began to recognize how his statements that all social groups are equal concealed and inhibited his ability to disclose issues related to class.

An important issue brought up by the new emphasis on writing in the classroom is the question of the kinds of messages given to students by the assignment of varied kinds of writing. This issue, in turn, must allude to the deeper concern of issues related to what *ought* to be the role of education itself. (Odell, 1985; Clifford, 1990; Knoblauch, 1990; Bleich, 1990; Rose, 1985; Heath, 1990).

Many researchers have turned to the work of Bakhtin for an analysis of competing purposes for writing and education. In The Dialogic Imagination (1981) Bakhtin argues that two forces are at work in language, the *centrifugal* and the *centripetal*. The centripetal is made up of what pulls us toward linguistic norms, the pressure to conform to a set of rules, genre conventions, to discourse etiquettes, all of which he says, "unite and centralize verbal ideological thought" (1981). The counterforce, the centrifugal, pulls away from those norms. Bakhtin goes on from that to elaborate the difference between "authoritative discourse" (language of others we recite and retell and never make our own) and "internally persuasive discourse" (language we do internalize, make our own and use for own purposes).

Within writing classrooms the tensions between allowing students to explore and create internally persuasive language and the message that the student's ultimate role is to reproduce the cannons of existing authoritative knowledge of their textbooks and their

teachers are pervasive and as yet largely unexamined. Harold Rosen is one researcher who has investigated one issue related to this question: the importance of narrative writing in the classroom (1986; 1988). Narrative, he points out, naturally lends itself to internally persuasive discourse. Not only, as we have seen, is it a link between thought and writing, it is also is also uniquely creative. As Rosen says, evoking the words of Umberto Eco:

> To tell a story is to take a stance towards events and rather than reflect as world, to create a world. To begin a story is to make a choice from an infinity of possibilities, selecting one set rather than another. That is why it is not just fiction which is an exercise of the imagination, it is any construction of narrative coherence. From this all else flows. (1986: 231)

Such a view is echoed by Jerome Bruner (1986) who posits that narrative is an essential and yet different form of knowing from that expressed through logical argumentation. Advocating narrative as way of knowing which can enrich psychology, has spent many hours listening to people tell their stories. Like Rosen, Bruner sees narratives as recipes for structuring experience itself and for reaching beliefs, desires, expectations, emotions and intentions in ways that other forms of discourse cannot.

> The ultimate function of autobiography is self-location, the outcome of a navigational act that fixes position in a virtual rather than real sense. Through autobiography we locate ourselves in the symbolic world of culture. Through it, we identify with a family, a community and indirectly a culture. . . . But at the same time that our autobiographical acts locate us culturally, they also serve to individuate us, to define . . . *agency*. If the "inside" complexity of autobiography is given by the disjunction between self as narrator and self as subject, the "outside" complexity is assured by this Janus-like requirement of declaring both allegiance and independence in the act of autobiography. (1990: 8)

Important questions for researchers to consider, says Rosen, are why the autobiographical impulse is considered less valid and why it is so often thwarted within education. One reason, he suggests, is that narrative is too powerful a means to assert authority against institutionalized power, or, more precisely, he says, "discourses of power" (Rosen, 1988: 75). Educators may have ambivalent feelings toward "students' right to their own text" (Brannon and Knoblauch, 1982). Such issues bring into the arena of instruction

political questions. They can open up conflicts inside teachers who may be unsure of whether and how to share power in the classroom, between teachers and their authorities, between teachers and students and among students. They can reveal deeper questions related to life inside and outside the classroom, as Bloome and Solskin point out:

> When we really listen to people's stories, their pain becomes visible to us. Their stories give us a window to world not itself whole-an economic legal and political system that silences and makes invisible a large number of people.(1990: 4)

Enfranchising students by allowing them to create and interpret meanings in the classroom accomplishes political as well as educational purposes. It can lead to an uncovering of forms of repression and also illuminate openings for the possibility of struggling and resisting those influences (Giroux, 1988, Robinson, 1990). Unequal and competing interests are subtle but can be revealed through, for example, analysis of the way in which one meaning becomes privileged over another through the medium of language. As Willinsky, again citing the influence of Bahktin, points out:

> Meanings are established at the very intersection of these interests, in the play of differences that sets the meaning of one term in relation to another. One only need think of how meaning works with primary social categories: man/woman, Christian/Jew, white/black, conservative/liberal . . . decoding/ meaning, personal/public, and oral/literate. The differences are established as one group writes the equation that defines their meaning in relation to each other with a privileging of one term over the other in a manner that is soon taken for granted. (Willinsky, 1990: 270)

These issues open up many kinds of practical as well as political debates among writing researchers. For one thing, as Applebee and Langer (1987) point out, process oriented approaches in and of themselves are not necessarily effective in helping students to think and write clearly. To be effective, they found, writing needs to involve various elements of instructional scaffolding, including allowing students to write texts appropriate to their interests and experiences, to feel ownership of their work and to collaborate with fellow students. On the other hand, allowing for collaborations and the production of "internally persuasive discourse" can create the conditions for the resistance of traditional education.

Scholars such as Knoblauch point out that "modest symbols of self-determination to release built-up pressures of dissatisfaction" (1990: 79) are often permitted within writing classrooms to aid in administrative control rather than with the ultimate aim of changing the nature of education (an issue we will address later in this study).

Tensions also exist concerning the kinds of writing that will ultimately benefit students the most. Mina Shaunessy points out that:

> A person who does not control the dominant code of literacy on a society that generates more writing than any society in history is likely to be pitched against more obstacles than are apparent to those who have already mastered that code. (1977:298)

Lisa Delpit echoes those concerns when she says:

> Let there be no doubt: a "skilled" minority person who is not also capable of critical analysis becomes the trainable, low-level functionary of dominant society, simply the grease that keeps the institutions which orchestrate his or her oppression running smoothly. On the other hand, a critical thinker who lacks the "skills" demanded by employers and institutions of higher learning can aspire to financial and social status only within the disenfranchised underworld. Yet, if minority people are to effect the change which will allow them to truly progress we must insist on "skills" *within the context* of critical and creative thinking. (Delpit, 1986: 384)

It is amid such debates and research considerations as these that this study is framed. Research in the social context, as we have seen, must juggle many complex and dynamic considerations, including practical, political and epistemological ones, if we are to understand what constitutes "purposeful" writing and literacy among varied groups of people. To be valuable, a study of writing and publishing among adult beginning readers must link conceptions with practices, home with school and present practices with historical influences. Keeping this in mind, we will now turn our attention to writing and publishing among adult beginning readers, starting with the historical dimensions of its practice.

CHAPTER III

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WRITING AND PUBLISHING BY ADULT BEGINNING READERS

Compared to other fields within education, relatively little is known about the history of adult literacy education. Within that, the history of writing and publishing in literacy programs is no exception. Although the practice is growing, there exists little documentation of grassroots practices, nor as mentioned earlier, have the learner-written materials that resulted from these projects been systematically collected and studied. This chapter does not represent a definitive history of writing and publishing in the United States (although such a study would be a valuable contribution to the field). But it does provide readers with at least some general notion of how this study fits within a wider context. The information described here is based on interviews with practitioners and an informal collection of materials scattered through local programs, in teacher training handbooks and in a few scholarly journals from England, Canada and the United States. (Many of those programs currently publishing learner writing in the United States are described in more detail in the annotated bibliography found in the Appendix.)

Writing and Publishing Before the 1970's

Until the 1970's there is little indication that writing was a significant part of adult literacy education. Most programs stressed reading. In fact, Cook reports that until the 1960's, even reading materials directed toward adult beginning readers were practically nonexistent (1977).

One of the few early programs we know about which produced materials with adult beginners in mind were the Moonlight Schools of Kentucky, founded in the years before

World War I. Since no texts were available, founder Cora Wilson Stewart edited the Rowan Country School Messenger, made up of school and local news. During the thirties and forties, materials began to be developed to meet particular needs. For example, local staff wrote Day by Day at Clemson for WPA workers living in opportunity camps in the thirties. In the forties the army and navy developed basal readers, a low readability version of The Newsmap, a periodical called Our War, and a filmstrip to teach reading called The Story of Private Pete. During the fifties, the Laubach method, along with its sequential readers, became popular; by the sixties many more materials, primarily based on a programmed workbook format, were developed. Writing in these programs appears to have consisted of primarily of handwriting, grammar, writing to test reading comprehension and later functional writing, such as check writing, filling in job applications and, occasionally, some letter writing (Cook, 1977).

Community Writing: British and Canadian Roots

Worker Writing in Great Britain

In the United Kingdom community literacy programs began involving adult beginning readers in writing and publishing on a wide scale more than a decade before programs did in the United States. Cambridge House Literacy Scheme, one of the oldest local agencies, brought attention to the problem of literacy in the mid sixties when one of the staff published an article describing their work (Charnley and Jones, 1979: 1). This was the beginning of a period through the seventies when literacy was "a small whirlwind of innovation and national promotion" (Charnley and Jones, 1979: 5). Many literacy schemes, the media, BBC television, libraries and other voluntary and governmental programs joined together to form a campaign to publicize issues related to literacy, to raise money for literacy efforts and to encourage students to attend classes. In 1974, a national organization now called the called

the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit was funded by the government to coordinate efforts.

Attention to adult literacy coincided with a growing interest in the revival of what is referred to as worker or community writing. Many of the adult literacy schemes were located within local community centers beginning to reprint writing that had disappeared from circulation and to publish histories, poetry and autobiographies written by local people. In 1976, when these groups founded a Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers, adult literacy schemes were readily included as members. The group organized regular meetings between members and helped groups to find ways to publish their work. In their book chronicling the history of the period, Republic of Letters: Working Class Writing and Local Publishing, (1982) Dave Morley, Ken Worpole and their colleagues comment that:

> These developments took place partly because adult literacy is marginal, underfunded and sketchily organized, so that even at the height of the "literacy campaign" no major resources were put into the creation of learning materials. . . . There was a dead weight of material devised for secondary remedial work, which was soon discarded by most people as transparently irrelevant; but whether we were working from the limited notion of relevance, or from the broader idea that value lies in the greatest possible participation in the creation of the learning material with which you work, the only thing was for students and tutors to do it themselves. It became clear that this was a radical alteration to the concepts of functional literacy that not only limited the uses of literacy to those that met bureaucratic requirements, but continued to rule invalid and inadequate the language in which working class people express, organize and present their lives and understanding. (1982:126)

Participation of adult literacy schemes was further consolidated when a National Federation of Voluntary Literacy Schemes was founded. Many members began to find ways to get funds to publish materials written by their students and distributed catalogs of their books so other members could buy them. Merry (1988) reports that his 1982-1984 survey indicated that at that time over sixty programs produced books and magazines. Twenty seven programs organized various kinds of writing workshops. A description of some of those projects illustrates the flavor of literacy activities at the time. (Addresses for obtaining publisher catalogs from England are listed in the Appendix.)

Centerprise

My first born was a girl.
That Sunday morning I remember so well.
She was born with the early morning dew.
With the twinkling shepherd's star and the sky so blue.

Betty Jacob, Every Birth It Comes Different
Centerprise Publishing Project

Centerprise was one of the founding members of the new federation. Located in the heart of Hackney, East London, it was started in 1971. At the time, they report, Hackney had a population of 20,000, but it didn't have a single bookstore or cultural center. One of the first books published was called A Hoxton Childhood. In it A.S. Jasper described his childhood growing up in one of the poorest neighborhoods of Hackney. His book encouraged others to write autobiographies such as Not Expecting Miracles, The Austrian Cockney, Hackney Memory Chest. Soon teachers, conscious of the gap between the lives of their students and the reading material available to them, encouraged the center to produce materials with learners. Over time, writers workshops were held as well as exhibitions, talks by local writers and public readings. The Publishing Project continues to produce and sell books produced by history projects, young people's, black and women's writing groups and "beginner books" by and for literacy students.

Gatehouse

I can remember when I was a little child. Well, I suppose most people can remember when they was a little child. But I came from a poor family and I know what it's like to be poor and hungry and to have no bed. Yes, I can see it now, as my mother used to lay us down on the floor with coats for mattress, and coats over us for blankets and sheets and even one for a pillow, a coat rolled up. Quite often my father he was out of work because he couldn't walk. It was some form of rheumatism he had. Even when my mother went to work we never got hardly anything to eat. I don't know why...

Josie Byrnes, Never in a Loving Way,
Gatehouse Press

Another of the largest and most prolific community publishing groups to put out work by adult learners is Gatehouse in Manchester. Like Centerprise, some of their first books were autobiographies: A Good Life, A Woman on Her Own and Never in a Loving Way. By the early eighties they also began to publish collections by authors writing in groups. Who Feels It Knows It collects the experiences of West Indian students living in Manchester, Who Am I? and Tip of My Tongue were written by women's groups.

Later projects reflect a growing trend for publications in which writers examine their lives collectively. Where Do We Go From Here: Adult Lives Without Literacy includes reflections by eleven adults about what it has meant to them to live as non-readers in a modern world. The Beaumont Writers Group, written by participants in the Spastic Society, reflects on issues important to this group of disabled people. In the late eighties, Doreen McLaren wrote the imaginative The Love I Lost and three plays were produced by a students at a local psychiatric hospital. In 1985 two groups of students and teachers collaborated to produce Opening Time: A Writing Resource Pack Written By Students in Basic Education. This handbook represents an innovative effort to allow learners themselves to produce training materials for others, bringing together day to day transcripts of student writing, samples of work in the students' own handwriting and examples of their reflections together on the meaning of writing.

Other Publishing Projects

> The worst thing about school was not being able to read. Sometimes we had to read round the class. When my turn came I'd just make any words up. I felt ashamed....When the teachers found out about my fits they thought it was that stopped me reading. They'd give me other things to do when other kids were reading. I'd do coloring and painting.
>
> Lindsey Garnett, Upon Remembering
> Leeds City Council Continuing Education

Other projects reflected similar histories. Peckham Publishing Project, founded in 1977, began a local book shop called The Bookplace and in 1987 started publishing

Booknews, a magazine with descriptions of projects and authors from around Great Britain. Triangular Minds: Black Youth On Identity, published through the Community Education's Afro-Caribbean Language Unit in Manchester, was started by Afro-Caribbean youth and led to a process of action to promote change in the community. Upon Reflection began around events related to an International Women's Day March in 1986 in Leeds and led to an on-going writing group for beginning women writers. The Hammersmith Literacy Scheme, Cave Publications, Spike Press and others mentioned here distribute their publications through AVANTI Books, a major publishing house for books produced by local schemes and commercial publishers. Their catalog is an excellent resource for those who want to know more about the range of student publishing in Great Britain.

Write First Time

If I could only change
the thoughts inside of me
would flow from pen to paper,
from breath to sound.
I would be superman,
a hero, a friend,
inside of me
inside of me.

I would sing it
I would say it
I would write it first time
My thoughts on paper
P.S. See the new me!

Tony, Write First Time, Year 3, No. 1

Much of the early linking work in England was done by a collective who produced Write First Time, a quarterly magazine by and for adult learners and also a founding member of the Federation. Published in a large, newspaper format, Write First Time contained poetry, life stories, opinion pieces, and descriptions of local events from students' viewpoints, as well as many high quality photographs. All together eighteen programs participated. Its history, as described in its last issue of March, 1985 (Year 10, No. 1) will

be recounted here in some detail since it was so influential to the evolution of writing in England.

Write First Time, as a group of people, came together in 1974 when literacy practitioner Sue Gardner Shrapnel circulated a paper called "Can We Produce a Teaching Newsletter for Literacy Work?" and invited people to a further meeting. "It was only as the group began to meet and work over the idea that someone pointed out that we were talking about *writing* as well as reading," remembered the group. They tried to get money from the labor unions, the big charities, and UNESCO, but they ended up paying for the first issue themselves. In the end, it was the Adult Literacy Resource Agency (which later became the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit or ALBSU) which gave the group their first grant, and continued to provide funding for the next ten years. The writing for the first issues came mainly from the students of the tutors who organized the group: from Liverpool, Crewe, Macclesfield, Lewes, Bedford and London. But by 1977 authors from all over the country were contributing and the group decided it was time to "meet" the authors. The first writing weekend was held, with forty students and twenty tutors.

At that time it was decided that each issue would be made in a different place so new groups could learn how to read, select, typeset and illustrate the paper. In 1978 another national conference was held; during the years that followed students joined the Collective, and participated in overall management and planning, and in the continual job of looking for funding. Then, as throughout its history, much of the work on a local level was unpaid. The Collective also put together an exhibition which travelled all over the country as well as to India, West Germany, and Kenya and produced and distributed lists of all the books and magazines published by local centers. The circulation of the magazine grew to over 7,000.

By the 1980 National conference a need was expressed for knowing more about how people worked at writing before it got to the newspaper. With funds from ALBSU, Sue Gardner Shrapnel was hired full time and for three years worked as a traveling trainer. Out of this work came a set of learner-centered training materials called Conversations with

Strangers, available through ALBSU. For reasons which will be addressed in Chapter Seven in a discussion of censorship, the publication ended in 1985.

Other Roots: Writing and Publishing in Canada

The community writing movement spilled over into literacy programs in Canada and, through Canadian publications especially, began to influence the United States in the early eighties. Here are just a few activities which took place in Canada.

East End Literacy Project

> My name is Rose. I live with my husband, Paul. We have been happy for many years. But I still have bad dreams. My dreams are about my Dad. When I was six he beat me up with his belt buckle. My Mum loved me. She tried to help me but when she did he beat her up too. In my dreams I say, "Don't touch me! Leave me alone!" Paul has to wake me up. In the morning the dreams are gone. The cat jumps on the bed. She likes to play. I have my own life now. But my dreams are true. This is my story.
>
> Rose Doiron, My Name is Rose
> East End Literacy Press

One of the first such projects was the East End Literacy Project. Located in downtown Toronto this small community based literacy program formed the East End Press and began publishing The Writer's Voice, a student newsletter, and books by students. One of their photonovelas, Working Together is written by students who, after talking about problems they had related to filling out different kinds of forms and mail solicitations, decided to begin a research project and produce a simple book giving advice to other new readers. In a later collective project, a group wrote a book about how students have taken leadership in their program and gave advice on how to run meetings, speak in public and plan special events. Later, a women's discussion group was formed and the participants helped Rose Doiron to write My Name is Rose, her story of being abused when she was

young. Domine Press, a Canadian clearinghouse for books on English as a Second Language and literacy, now distributes their books nationally and internationally.

Parkdale Project Read

> We put the clothes in pan and bring it to the river and scrub. After when you scrub the clothes down you rinse and after you rinse the clothes in the water you spread the clothes in the grass to dry. Lots of people all over the place in the river, everybody scrubbing. We don't have to pay no money. We just bring them to the river and scrub and scrub and scrub.
>
> Pearl, Parkdale Writes, Vol. 3

Parkdale Project READ is another community-based Canadian literacy group that began to involve students in writing. Also located in Toronto, they formed the Parkdale People's Press which distributes Parkdale Writes, a learner newsletter, and books such as My Story, in which Olive Bernard tells about arriving in Canada from Jamaica and looking for work, and She's Speaking Out, Janet Ryan's story of her struggles with the school system and with working.

Women's Literacy Projects in Canada

In Canada, the networking around writing and publishing movement has been strongly influenced by feminism. Getting There: Producing Photostories with Immigrant Women (1980) was one early project that connected literacy with women's issues. Produced with facilitators associated with the Participatory Research Group in Canada and ESL students, this book provided directions, a model and a critique of issues relevant to producing materials with adult students. Later, in 1987, a woman's project of the Participatory Research Group in Canada produced a kit designed to be the basis for the discussion of women's issues, and included in it materials from Latin America, Africa and England. Writings from beginning readers, such as parts of I Want to Write It Down, from the Peckhman Publishing Project in England are included in the text.

Women literacy workers also came together to produce an issue of the Canadian Women's Studies Journal (1988) entirely devoted to the subject of women, literacy and writing. Two years later, the International Council of Adult Education's bulletin, Voices Rising, also devoted an issue to women and literacy. Titled "The Literacy Issue: Feminist Perspectives on Reading and Writing," (1990) it describes women's writing projects around the world. A Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (1990) has also begun a project to develop an annotated resource guide to Canadian literacy materials for women, including many produced by learners. Sending out questionnaires to more than 2,000 women's and literacy groups around the country, they hope to publish and distribute the guide in 1991.

The Spread of Writing and Publishing in the United States

Writing and publishing came to the United States later and with a somewhat different emphasis. Since no formal historical research on this topic has been undertaken we can only speculate on its roots. Practitioners working during the period cite the popularization of the "language experience approach" as one influence. Originally developed to get young children started with reading, this method involves learners in dictating stories to a teacher, who transcribes them and uses them as a basis for reading instruction. In 1975, New Readers Press, a division of Laubach Literacy International published a book outlining how tutors could use this approach with adults (Kennedy,1975). This, perhaps coupled with an awareness of new kinds of writing in public schools, with Freirian pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Fiore & Elasser, 1982) and with new research in adult learning may have been some of the roots that initially led early programs to write with students. Later, the writing requirement in the test for high school equivalency (GED) provided an additional stimulus for adult educators to begin to teach writing.

One of the first projects to publish was Literacy Volunteers of New York City. In 1975 they initiated The Big Apple Journal, a semi-annual, city-wide anthology of student writing. In Vermont, the state-wide adult basic education program also began The Green Mountain Eagle, now one of the oldest continuing newspapers by adult beginning readers. But the real growth of writing and publishing in the United States did not begin until the eighties. Over the past ten years, and especially in the last three or four, many programs have appeared. I have selected a few programs to describe here to illustrate how programs got started and some of the ways they have spread.

Publishing in Cities, Suburbs and Country Towns

The Writing Process in the Big City: New York

I like going to Coney Island,
eating hot dogs,
riding on the Cyclone.
I love to watch the waves from the sea.
If I could write, I could tell a thousand stories.

Doris Highsmith & Virginia Johnson
Speaking from the Heart, New Writers' Voices

New York City is one of the places where writing and publishing has proliferated and where training is perhaps most accessible. Since 1982 adult literacy teachers have attended workshops on writing offered by the National Writing Project. By 1986 they had organized special summer institutes specifically around their needs, in conjunction with Lehman College. Shorter workshops have also been held by the Literacy Assistance Center, a clearinghouse for literacy programs. In 1986 the Literacy Assistance Center newsletter, Information Update (Vol. 2, No. 3) devoted an entire issue to the topic of writing and since then some issues of that newsletter have consisted entirely of learner writing.

Many programs write and publish, including The Centers for Reading and Writing sponsored by public libraries around the city, the Bronx Educational Center, Lehman College, The Open Book in Brooklyn and the Literacy Volunteers of New York City, to name only a few. Smaller community-based programs have received funds through the Community Development Agency to put out publications and workplace programs such as the International Ladies Garment Workers Union have organized student-run writing committees.

One of the early programs to apply the writing process to the adult literacy context was the Literacy Volunteers of New York City. Marilyn Boutwell, one of the catalysts for writing in that program, was kind enough to respond to my request for more detailed information about her own history using writing with adult beginning readers. She is currently an Associate Director of Literacy Volunteers of New York City. Her story illustrates one way this innovation was disseminated among teachers.

Not unlike many teachers I have spoken with, Boutwell recounts that she began using writing in her teaching by intuition, rather than by explicit training. As a writer herself, she knew its therapeutic value. When she started work in a state hospital for emotionally disturbed children, it was a natural extension of her own experience to have them write. In 1981 she heard about the work Donald Graves was doing with children. Intrigued, she attended a writing workshop for teachers at the University of New Hampshire. For the next two years she worked as a teacher-researcher with third grade children and, through her work with the New Hampshire group, became steeped in the writing process approach. In the fall of 1982, when Lucy Calkins invited her to New York City to help her start up a summer writing workshop for teachers at the Teachers' College at Columbia University, she agreed.

It was here that Boutwell first became connected with adult literacy. Along with public school and college level teachers, several of the people who attended that first workshop were staff members of Literacy Volunteers of New York City. Ann Lawrence, one of the participants, remembers, "We always based our work on students' interests, but

when it came to writing, we just felt we weren't meeting students' needs. We asked Marilyn to train with us." Up to that time, most of the students at Literacy Volunteers were working on a one-to-one basis with tutors. Boutwell recalls:

> As I began at their corporate sites, I was astonished by how adamant the adult learners were about their belief that they had failed as learners. Although the sites were full of student-tutor pairs, the students would not relinquish their feelings of isolation. They not only could not see that others shared similar feelings, but many felt that their learning would cease if their own tutor left. (1989:44)

The staff began to form writing workshop groups made up of students, tutors and staff at various sites. Groups began to try choosing their own topics for writing, sharing their work with each other and holding writing celebrations. By the next year, instead of working one-to-one, some tutors began to co-teach groups, with about six adult new readers in each and Boutwell began to focus on how to make the connections between reading and writing. Not everyone took to the change. The students resisted at first, as did many tutors, but the model spread. One of the tutors reflected:

> The first thing was to help my group realize they had something in common - they were all learning to read and write. When they realized that, they found out how they could help each other. There was a catharsis in that. They could begin to develop their own self-confidence, share and rely on one another as well as on us. They became bolder in everything they did. (1989: 45)

Although not all tutors were comfortable with this style of work, over the years that followed the use of writing workshops expanded. Learners also took on greater roles as staff persons and a student committee was formed to advise the staff. When many LVNYC staff persons left in 1984 to start the New York City Public Library Reading and Writing Centers, writing was extended into their programs. And, the staff at LVNYC began to train teachers from other programs. A training video produced by Boutwell for the Teacher-to-Teacher Series (1989) distributed by New Readers Press allowed training to reach even wider audiences.

In 1985 the organization also decided to expand their publishing activities. Nancy McCord, who was president of the board of directors of Literacy Volunteers of New York City and also vice president of Warner Books, had the idea of producing commercial quality publications for sale. The first series of paperback books was published in 1988. Most were adaptations of books by well known authors such as Maxine Hong Kingston, Loretta Lynn and Bill Cosby, but one of them, Speaking Out on Health, was an anthology by students. The books were widely advertized and thousands were sold around the country along with another new publication News and Reviews, a magazine devoted to book reviews by and for adult beginning readers. In 1989 a second series of books was published; this time five of them were written by beginning readers. Two of the books, designed for the most beginning readers, were written by individual students. In When Dreams Come True, Calvin Miles wrote about a memorable Christmas in his childhood and returned to his home town in the south with a professional photographer to create illustrations for the story. In Can't Wait for Summer, Theresa Sanservino wrote about a seashore vacation.

Moving Out to the Suburbs:
Suffolk County, New York

> I used to like to write on paper with black ink because it looked nice. Black ink on paper. I thought it was the way writers wrote. But now I know that the color of the inks is not what makes a writers. . . . This story is more than ink on paper. It is the heart of the writer that makes the story and not the paper or ink.
>
> Robert Ortiz, Reading for Life, Issue 2

In Suffolk County, New York, Helen Morris, a staff person at the Literacy Volunteers of America branch in Suffolk County got interested in writing when she asked a grandfather she was tutoring to keep a diary and write letters. After trying it with a few other students she decided to learn more. She visited Literacy Volunteers of New York City and talked to her county coordinator about how they might help tutors to get started. By October, 1988 they had organized a series of monthly writing workshops held in community room of the library in Commack, Connecticut. Every student was given a copy of The Big

Apple Journal and they decided to use it as a model for their magazine, Reading for Life, first published in the spring of 1989. Now workshops are being held in the other parts of the county.

A Contest and Beyond:

Writing and Publishing in Pennsylvania

> Gail said, "Look John I've been in the dye factory for ten years and coming home and doing the same thing every night. I want something else for myself. Can you understand that? John just sat there for a few minutes and said, "I think I do understand."
>
> Helen White, Our Words, Our Voices, Our Worlds

In Pennsylvania, literacy practitioners, hearing about the writing process from projects with children, decided to organize a state-wide writing contest as a way to acquaint adult education teachers with the writing process. Began in 1984, the contest included ABE, ESL and GED students. Training sessions were held in collaboration with kindergarten-college age teachers, many of whom were associated with the National Writing Project. The project produced a publication about the process, Publishing an Anthology of Adult Student Writing: A Partnership for Literacy (see Appendix D.) as well as the student written publication Our Words, Our Voices, Our Worlds. Copies were distributed to programs throughout the state.

One of the participants in the contest, the Lutheran Women's Settlement House in Philadelphia has encouraged students to write for many years and has produced some of the few teacher handbooks about writing -- Writing for Beginning Readers (1985) and Teaching Expository Writing: A Curriculum for Teachers (Bush: 1987). One of their handbooks, based on oral histories collected from learners, has been commercially published by New Readers Press as a two volume set of workbooks called Remembering (1988). Other programs in Philadelphia have also played leadership roles in the writing and publishing movement, including LaSalle University and The Center for Literacy. Currently, with a grant from the Knight Foundation, the Center for Literacy is producing an anthology on

students writing and an accompanying handbook to show teachers how to use the anthology as a teaching tool.

Getting Rural Experiences into Print: Kentucky

> Grandfather was born August 19, 1884, in Shelby County, Kentucky. His mother was a full blooded Cherokee and her maiden name was Hagen. She and my great-grandfather met in Tennessee or North Carolina, then came to Kentucky. They lived in Clay Village, Kentucky. My great-grandfather was a farmer. That fall when he stripped out his tobacco crop he paid off the grocery bills and gave the rest of the money to the grocery man to give to my great-grandmother. He told the grocery man to tell her that he was leaving and wouldn't be back.

C.F.F. Slices of Life, Volume II

In Kentucky the 1980 census had revealed that the state had the highest percentage of people over the age of twenty five in the country who couldn't read. Literacy practitioner, Judy Cheatham, reflected that most of the programs primarily used Laubach materials which she felt had little relevance to the rural life experiences of the students. "This is a snake; this is an olive!" she exclaimed, remembering that one tutor had to take her student to the grocery store to see what an olive was.

Ramona Lumpkin, the director of the Kentucky Humanities Council decided that, given the statistics, it was clear that half the population didn't have access to humanities materials. Along with others, she formed a Kentucky Literacy Council and through a grant form the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Kentucky Humanities Council and the Kentucky Post worked with local scholars to produce a series of books for students. During the process, sections of the manuscripts were taken to students, who met in groups to give feedback on the clarity and content. As they visited the programs, Judy Cheatham became more convinced that students also had their own stories to tell. But, although she was familiar with the writing process, many of the largely volunteer literacy staff were not. "If we throw Laubach in the river, they'll throw us too," she feared.

Working with the Humanities Council, she began to involve a few groups in writing and, with her assistance, students soon began submitting articles for their new magazine,

Slices of Life. By 1989 there were 90 entries, from five counties. "What I didn't realize was that I was doing something really radical," she said. "Trying to obliterate links between teachers and students. I know I've broken barriers between students and teachers, but there are still teachers in the state that think students can't do it." But that is changing. Slices of Life is now working on its third issue. And, in June, 1990 the Kentucky Literacy Commission began publishing its first new-reader newspaper, with help for the Louisville Courier Journal and the Lexington Herald Leader. Ron Horseman, the first student editor, is asking students around the state to help chose a name for the publication, which will come out once every three months.

Programs with National and International Scope

Three publications deserve special mention here because of their national or international scope. The first, Students Speaking Out is a newsletter by and for new readers participating in programs sponsored by Laubach Literacy Action. Started in 1989, it focuses on reporting news of national and regional events for new readers and advocating for new reader participation in the organization. A recent issue, for example, was devoted to reporting the experiences of participants at the Second National Adult Literacy Congress, which sent new reader delegates from around the country to Washington, D.C.

Another project, Book Voyage, was organized as part of the United Nations International Literacy Year in 1990. Designed by The International Task Force on Literacy, the project created a series of blank books which traveled from literacy center to literacy center around the world. At "book launching" ceremonies new readers were asked to write, draw, or express in their own way, messages they would like to share with others in the world. The giant book, with pages from all over the world, was translated into major languages and presented to the Secretary-General of the United Nations at a ceremony at

their headquarters in December, 1990. The final outcome of the project will include national, regional and international books.

A third publication with international scope is Voices magazine, published out of The Lower Mainland Society for Literacy and Employment in Surrey, British Columbia. This innovative, open-admissions literacy project began in 1984. The only thing learners received when they entered the program was a blank notebook they sometimes call a "scribbler." Writing, from the start was the central element of the program as well as self-selection of books from their library. As the organizers of the project soon found, there were not enough good reading materials for students. So, with a grant from the Canada Employment and Immigration Centre, they decided to produce a high quality magazine which they hoped would bring a wide range of programs together. In their first issue, published in the fall of 1988, they commented on some of their reasons for starting the magazine:

> We believe that much of the reading material promoted for use with adult beginning readers does not meet the needs of adult language learners, who must be exposed to a wider range of reading materials and encouraged to use these materials. Students indicate that beginning readers find the works of beginning writers both motivational and instructional. Therefore, the majority of the writing in this magazine is student-produced. . . . The concepts expressed in this magazine are not original to us. What is surprising, however, is that so few adult programs experiment with these ideas, preferring instead to use the more traditional methods that failed learners the first time around. We hope Voices will encourage the development of true learner-centered programs and will eventually become a useful tool for them. (1988:1)

Now in its ninth issue, the magazine has grown to bring together contributors from more than forty literacy programs in the United States, Canada and Africa and to reach a wide distribution (for a cost of $12.00 for a year's subscription). What distinguishes the magazine is the quality of its production and of the writing. Each eighty-page issue has a professional glossy cover photograph. Inside, each student's work is presented on a separate page, or pages, along with a short biography. Facing the text is a full page photograph of the author, taken by a local professional photographer hired by the editors. The magazine

starts with short pieces written by beginning writers; longer pieces and sometimes one or two articles by teachers are at the end. Authors are both literacy and English as a Second Language students.

Writing Outside Literacy Programs

Other projects which are not explicitly organized as adult literacy programs are also involving adult beginning readers in writing workshops in homeless shelters, battered women's clinics, parent clinics and housing projects. The Jefferson Park Writing Project is one example. Formed in 1981 in basement rooms of the Jefferson Park Housing Project in Cambridge, Massachusetts the women met together simply to write. They began to produce a widely read literary magazine, Hear My Soul's Voice, with funds from the Cambridge Housing Authority, the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities and a wide range of other groups. Over time the more workshops have been started and experienced writers have gone on to teach classes for literacy students around Boston, give community readings and participate in radio talk shows.

In Chicopee, Massachusetts, a similar project, the Chicopee Writers Group, was formed three years ago with a grant from the Chicopee Arts Council. Women in that housing project also write together and in 1989 they produced a commercial book, In Our Own Voices, distributed in many local bookstores. Like the Jefferson Park Writing Project, they too are now acting as teachers for other groups who want to get started with writing.

Summary

As these stories and the information found in the annotated bibliography indicate, a wide variety of writing and publishing projects now exist in the United States. In some cases writing is produced only to be shared within the classroom. They organize "author's

corners" of work-in-progress, "response journals" or simply provide copies for other students to read. Other times one or two articles may be printed in a program newsletter which is mainly for practitioners. Among those publications written entirely by and for learners, perhaps the largest categories are anthologies and newsletters. Often they consist of personal experience stories, poems, articles of opinion, advice, recipes, book reviews or a mixture of all of these. In other cases learners have produced individual books, often autobiographies. Still other projects include book reviews, video scripts, plays, the writing of program brochures, photonovelas and oral histories. One program, The Door in New York City, uses a computer bulletin board to pose a "question of the week" to which students respond. A few learners have participated in collaborative research projects and written about the results. A few others have published letters or articles as part of social action projects.

In some areas, particularly big cities like New York, Philadelphia and Boston, local networks are growing as a result of training workshops, student writing contests, writing collections in literacy clearinghouses and joint publications. Existing projects in those areas often serve as models for new ones. One or two publications are also beginning to link wider audiences through state-wide newspapers and writing contests. Within larger programs student committees also have been set up to link classes or projects at various sites. Many of these projects begin with a good deal of teacher direction; gradually as projects mature, efforts are made to increase ownership of the process by learners and expand the kinds of publications produced. Some writing also takes place outside the framework of traditional literacy projects, for example in housing projects, homeless shelters and women's projects. A very limited number of publications are now being professionally produced and distributed for sale by individual programs. One or two such publications have national and international scope.

But, for the most part, in the United States writing and publishing remains an isolated phenomenon. Unlike in Great Britain, no mechanism for sharing information on a national basis exists. Programs are not linked to other kinds of writing collectives, nor is there a

clearinghouse through which locally produced materials are distributed. Most writing projects continue to work independently at the grassroots level.

CHAPTER IV
THE CONTEXT FOR WRITING

From among these U.S.-based literacy programs whose learners write and publish, three were selected to participate in this study. Each context was different. At Read/Write/Now, students from around the city joined a library literacy program with writing as only one among many goals. Opening Doors was created from among rural learners who had worked with one-to-one tutors with the aim of publishing in mind. At the Publishing for Literacy Project, representatives came from many kinds of community-based programs around metropolitan Boston.

The purpose of this chapter is to give a short history of each site and a general description of the contexts out of which the writing groups arose. In describing the sites, it is important to remember that the focus of this study was not on what occurred on a day-to-day basis in the classroom. No direct observation of writing groups was undertaken either at one point or over time. The core of the research centers around learners' perspectives of the experience of becoming authors based on in-depth interviews with them and shorter interviews with their teachers. The orientation to the sites found in this chapter comes from literature written about the program and from activities described in the interviews.

Learning to Write at Read/Write/Now

Read/Write/Now opened in the fall of 1987 in a cavernous, concrete-walled basement room of a community center in Springfield's North End. It was funded by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, and administered through the local library. The program was originally designed to field test a computer-based curriculum for adults who read below a "six grade" level. Three groups of about ten learners each attended those first classes.

The two-hour classes were held three times a week. Many learners came from the Puerto Rican neighborhood surrounding the community center. Others, from varied ethnic and racial backgrounds, heard about the program on television or radio and commuted from other parts of town. The first half of the semester-long curriculum was highly structured. Students learned to read by means of a laser disk-generated cartoon story and practiced touch typing on the computer.

Although in the early phase of the program the curriculum was highly individualized, teachers also tried to create an informal and collaborative environment. Lidia, a member of that first group recalls that at first she didn't know what to expect. "What am I doing here? I have so much to do at home," she recalls asking herself. But then the group "sat around like at a kitchen table" drinking coffee and munching on cookies. Then teachers got the group to start talking about their early experiences with literacy. Lidia remembers:

> It's like a snowball. It went down the hill and it becomes a big thing and you say something and hear other people in the group and they say something and its like, "Oh, yeah, that's way it is." And all of a sudden you're like one family there.

For the second phase of the computer-based curriculum, the teacher's manual called for students to engage in personal writing. The teachers at this site had studied whole language principles and participatory adult education in graduate school and were eager to try out a writing process approach. But the manual offered them few concrete guidelines. The next weeks were harried as they consulted the Centers for Reading and Writing in New York City and books written for use by teachers of children to plan what to do. Based on what they learned, they tried to use group discussions as a means for helping learners to chose their own topics for writing. Lidia recalls this process favorably. "And then you could talk about anything - your grandmother, your dog or your life, whatever you want. That put me at ease." she said.

"I thought we would have a lot of trouble getting people to generate ideas," said one of the teachers, "but they were all into it."

Lidia, whose story you will soon hear, was one of the first to begin. She sat down at the computer and pecked out the words, "My name is Lidia. I was born in Italy in 1939, in the middle of the depression and in the middle of the war." Every other word was misspelled, but her memories propelled her to keep going. Sitting next to her at the computer station, Linda watched and then began too. She started her story with the title My Terrible Experiences with Men. By the time she reached the last chapter, she'd changed her title to The End of Sadness. Others took longer to get started and found it difficult to get down words they couldn't spell, but, in time, they too wrote pieces of their life stories by hand or on the computer.

Time was always a problem. Those who could not get the words down on the page themselves needed to be helped to dictate their stories or record them on a tape recorder and they had to be transcribed by a teacher. Then, teachers had to create reading activities from the dictated stories for beginning readers and short mini-skills lessons in reading and writing strategies, spelling and grammar for those who could write independently. Learners needed to be helped to use the computer, the dictionary and word lists. In this new alternative curriculum time also needed to be allotted for sustained silent reading or assisted reading activities and to teach other kinds of functional skills individuals wanted to learn. And, informal assessment had to take place.

Yet in spite of these considerable obstacles, people did begin to finish their stories. They edited what they could themselves and sometimes asked teachers to do the final editing. Many published their stories in book form. Teachers reformatted the texts and helped people to paste in computer graphics or photos brought from home. By the end-of-the-semester celebration, a dozen of the students had their own books, printed on xeroxed paper folded in half and sporting colorful paper covers. They invited their families and a few friends to celebrate with them.

By the second semester writing had moved to the center of the curriculum. As authors began to get things down on paper, their sense of ownership of their ideas grew.

"You can see it right in front of you. It's your own," said one. Returning students shared their books with newcomers and prodded them into writing with impromptu pep talks. Teachers suggested that the classes produce a newsletter so everyone could get their words in print. The first issue of what continues to be a tri-annual publication of the program was born. In their introduction, students wrote:

> This paper represents a little bit of all of us. When we try to express ourself in paper we give our opinion and also learn to read and write. Thanks to our teachers and to the friendly atmosphere they create around us. In so short a time we think we did pretty good. We are a group of people who study at the Read/Write/Now Program in the Brightwood Branch Library at 200 Birnie Avenue in Springfield. This is also an invitation if anyone wants to join us. . . . This is our first newsletter. We hope we don't make nobody bored with the rest.
>
> Turning Our Lives Around,
> Vol. 1 No. 1, 1988

In the semesters that have followed, an average of thirty people attending Read/Write/Now have continued to write and publish individual books, the newsletter, cookbooks and anthologies. These materials, along with books teachers found from East End Press in Canada and commercial books became part of a growing library of reading materials.

During its third year, the program also received a small grant from the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy to hold the Brightwood New Authors Project. In weekly workshops ten participants learned about writing from local poets and an expert in oral history. Women from a writing group at a housing project in nearby Chicopee also came to read their poems and lead a freewriting session. The aim of the six-month project was to published a more professionally illustrated and typeset anthology.

Publishing that book provided new opportunities for students to collaborate. The group worked hard to find a title for their publication that represented their feeling about being united as a group. They settled on the title Different Worlds, Same Secret. Their teacher remembers:

> They're publishing a book. Its their book. They named it. They shared with each other a lot of the stories that are going

> into it. And a lot of the stories came out of presentations as a jumping off point. There was a lot of sharing around what the book was going to be. . . . They started to think of the audience for their work. Who was going to be reading it, that needs to be clear. And they wanted to be sure that their ideas are understood by someone else so they were willing to do a bit more work so their thoughts really came out clearly.

Today, as budget deficits threaten the Massachusetts economy, Read/Write/Now struggles to patch together funding from a variety of sources in order to remain open, one semester at a time. For many students, hours have been reduced. Since the only full time teacher is also the program administrator, sometimes class days have to be cut so she can write grants. Participants in the program, have tried to help. In this letter to the president Willie Carpenter wrote:

> I am uneducated, never had the opportunity to get much schooling. I am the oldest in my family and had to work on the farm. I was a waterboy starting at age five, carrying water out to the people in the field. I worked in the steel mills for 24 years. They offered me a foreman's job three times and I had to turn it down for no education. . . . I hope this program can continue because it means a lot to me and a lot of people, a whole life's dream.

Learning to Write at Opening Doors

Over the past decade, Vermont has undertaken an extensive state-wide adult basic education program. Since potential participants live in many spread out rural areas and often don't have transportation, the program was designed so that paid staff (referred to as tutors) could provide one to one tutoring in their homes. All of the authors interviewed in this study began their literacy instruction in this way and most continue to meet their tutors in addition to participating in the Opening Doors project described here.

The idea for Opening Doors began when tutor Ruth Barenbaum came across a copy of My Story written by Olive Bernard and published by Parkdale Project Read in Toronto. Ruth took it to read with one of her students. Ruth recalls that when they got to page two where Olive talked about her first job, Marion lit up. "Oh! My first job was cleaning houses

too!" she exclaimed. "That's just like me!" Later when she got to the page where the author described how she got fired, Marion again reflected, "That's like me, too" (1988: 4).

Ruth was a writer herself and had a keen love for literature. For years she had been frustrated with the quality of books available for adult beginning readers. "It's so hard to find things written with the voice of the adults who come to us for help," she lamented. Although Vermont publishes their monthly student newspaper The Green Mountain Eagle, many of the articles, usually written or transcribed with a one-to-one home tutor, were, to Ruth's mind "puppy stories" lacking depth and voice (1988: 1). She was intrigued by the idea of having students write their own books.

> Reading a book is a very different experience from reading a newspaper article. Though the text of My Story is not long, it is framed in space, complemented by line drawing that show Olive arriving from Jamaica, looking for work in the snow, scrubbing floors, deciding to make changes. The story unfolds page by page, which honors its stages. The book itself is the embodiment of the changes in Olive's status and power over her life. . . . No one will wrap up the garbage with in, or use it to make a fire.(1988: 4)

Ruth took the book to Diana Carminati, the ABE supervisor in Addison County. "How can we do something like this?" she asked. Diana wrote a federal library grant and received $25,000 through the Rutland Public Library to set up thirty hours of writing seminars at sites in Addison and Rutland Counties. The program, which would last four months, included money for child care and transportation, for training tutors, for the cost of paying illustrators and printers and for a coordinator. In October, Barry Lane, himself a writer and college teacher was hired as coordinator and began to travel between the sites.

When they set out to recruit students, they took along Olive's book and a few others they had found from East End Press. "Would you like to be part of a project to do this here?" they would ask. "When people said they couldn't spell, we showed them Olive's spelling [in the back of My Story]," Ruth later wrote. We said, "Doing this will help you learn to spell, write and most of all, tell your own story. We know you have stories to tell" (1989: 4).

Altogether twenty-one people joined the writing groups, meeting for two hours a week in local libraries. "The first library I ever went in," said one of the students. The only criterion for entry was that students could get down words on paper on their own without having to rely on a tutor for transcription. "If composing is about discovery and making sense of the world and our lives," said Ruth. "It seemed important that Opening Doors honor that distinction as part of its design, so both students and tutors could experience the difference" (1988: 6).

In the beginning tutors and students were a little apprehensive about how it would turn out. One of the participants remembers that, "On the way up I rode with Mary [her tutor]. She was as nervous as I was cause she never did something like that either." Since the workshop started at 5:00 people brought homemade food. It did so much to break the ice that it soon became a tradition.

> The first night we made a chart of ideas for real life stories. Then we began to write. We read to the person next to us (tutors too!) then to the group if we wanted to. . . . The tutors had a hard time convincing people that spelling is much less important than getting your ideas down on paper! As people wrote they got braver. As they read their writing to each other, they got new ideas. They write about things they never thought they'd write about. When we went to hear poet Ruth Stone at a potluck, we got even more courage. People began to learn how to criticize other people's stories and how to use criticism of their own. (Barenbaum, 1989: 9)

Over the four months coordinator Barry Lane also helped. Randy, one of the new writers, remembers:

> He had written some stories also. And some of his stories didn't get published but he kept on writing. . . . What made us feel great he brought in a simple rock and he passed it around and we looked at it and we all got our opinions on the rock: what shape it was, what it reminded us of. And he said that our minds that night made more out of that rock that some of the college kids that he had taught. So, it really gave us a boost. That was our second or third group meeting. . . . And another thing that he had us do was we went to the library and we looked around . . . and we'd write down on paper what things reminded us of.

Over time the participants began to write about what they knew best: their own experiences. They got used to the idea that they could help each other without it being considered "cheating". They learned concepts such as a "lead line", "voice", and "telling detail." Altogether twenty-three manuscripts were finished. Then, a selection committee, made up of librarians, a local project management team and the writers themselves selected ten manuscripts. These ten were field tested by around sixty adult basic education programs around the state.

Finally six of those manuscripts were chosen by the editing team to be published, including Debbie Gulliver's The Night Rape, about her experiences being raped by two co-workers in the cafeteria where she worked; Cliff Barrows The Fall Guy, about being beaten by his father and what happened with his own son; Rosa Champine's My Jobs in Italy; Lillian Cram's Left Handed about how she was punished by her first grade teacher for writing with her left hand; Randy Gaboriault's An Accident That Changed My Life about having accidentally shot someone while deer hunting; and Ruth Boise's The Lord Will Keep Me Going about having been sexually abused by her father.

The writers of the six manuscripts had as much input on production decisions as possible. They discussed the illustrations for the color covers, which side of the page to put the illustrations on and the font to use for the typeset. They decided to put photos of themselves on the back of each book and wrote short biographies to go under them. Each one worked closely with one of the three professional illustrators chosen for the project. Some of them provided their illustrators with photographs of their families. Others took them to the sites where the stories took place. After the drawings were completed, most of them were surprised at their accuracy. Ruth Boise remembers:

> The pictures he did is so much like them its haunting. Like he had an old fashioned refrigerator that was just like the old one. And the hanging light. You pull the plug. It was just like that.

But others did make changes, like Randy Gaboriault, who made the illustrator take the pom poms off the hunting hats, saying, "Guys didn't wear those."

In September, 1989 the finished books were unveiled at publication party in Middlebury. The authors were the guests of honor. Their families came as well as the press and local poets who read parts of their books. An article appeared in the Burlington Free Press. The Rutland Daily Herald published an eight page spread on the books in their Sunday magazine, the books were discussed on a local Sunday morning television program and even the New York Times wrote an article. Copies of the books were given to tutors and to every library in the state and displayed in local bookstores. Since that time over hundreds of books have been sold, for a price of $3.95 each. Students receive a percentage of the profit in royalties.

But the writing group did not end there. Randy remembers, "I think once our stories were published for my feeling I wanted to do more. I wanted to do another book. I think everybody felt the same." So, the authors in the Bristol writing group, along with their tutors, continue to meet once a week at the local ABE office. With modest funds from Adult Basic Education, they formed Homegrown Books. "I know I felt good about the ones in the group that had stories that didn't get published..and watching the makings of other stories to be published like ours," said Randy. Country Women, the first Homegrown Book, was an anthology of four stories by women who hadn't been published the first time around. Since Mary Boyer was ready to leave the group, they decided to publish her story My Life as an Orphan next. It only cost $40.00 to print, but for Mary it was a precious farewell.

Authors at the Publishing for Literacy Project

The Publishing for Literacy Project is collaboratively sponsored by three Boston area organizations: the Adult Literacy Resource Institute (ALRI) of Roxbury Community College, the Public Library of Brookline and the University of Massachusetts's Boston Campus. Adult beginning readers and English as a Second Language students from community-based

literacy programs around the city serve on an editorial committee, contribute poems and stories to the project's magazine, Need I Say More, and participate in other writing events.

The seed for literacy expansion in Boston began in 1980 when census figures showed that one in every three Boston adults did not have a diploma. What was more, forty-two percent of the state's poor resided in Boston. These figures painted a picture of Boston "that was in discord with its image as a cradle of higher education" (Kallenbach, 1989: 3) and disenfranchised thousands from participation in what was, at the time, the city's growing prosperity. The desire to address this situation led to the creation in 1983 of the Boston Adult Literacy Initiative, and through it the provision of over one million dollars in federal Community Block Grants which the city of Boston dedicated to literacy in the years 1983-1986. The project model was different from many others because funding supported collaborations with community-based programs and teachers, rather than relying on volunteers. As part of the model, in 1983 the Adult Literacy Resource Institute was formed to provide training, technical assistance, a resource library and other supports to the fourteen English as a Second Language, Basic Education and GED community programs chosen to participate (Kallenbach, 1989).

At that time, competency-based literacy instruction was being promoted. However, as teachers who worked in the project soon found, many of them were dissatisfied with this curriculum model. One of those teachers, Loren McGrail, remembers that teachers would meet on Saturdays to discuss alternatives. They shared materials they had obtained from the Participatory Research Group in Canada and books from East End Press. They formed relationships among themselves and shared ideas for how to develop more participatory approaches to basic education and English as a Second Language.

One of those teachers, Barbara Neumann, had the vision that writing could be one element of a more participatory framework for learning. As coordinator of the Critical Thinking Project at ALRI, along with Jim Diego McCollough, she wrote a grant to the ALRI and the Brookline Public Library to establish a city-wide "Literacy Publishing Project." The

grant would allow new authors to meet together and stipulated that it would be the students themselves who would have the leading role in choosing the writing which would be published in their own literary magazine.

When the proposal was accepted, the project hired Kona Khasu, a writer and teacher himself, to coordinate it. Kona soon realized that getting students together from around the city wasn't feasible. Students had neither time nor transportation funds to travel to a central site. So he, Loren McGrail and other consultants for the project began to visit local programs to help teachers to hold writing workshops in their classes. Some of the projects already had begun to write in their classrooms and were ready to take leadership roles. These classes then chose representatives to send to an Editorial Committee which would meet once a month to review submissions of writing and make choices about which ones would go into the magazine.

At first, Kona remembers, the student members of the Editorial Committee were reluctant to take leadership roles. They looked to the teachers in the group to tell them what was "good" writing. Teachers tried to drop the use of the terms "teacher" and "student" and refer to everyone as a "member" or a "writer" and to resist making decisions for the group. "We had to constantly remind ourselves that we weren't there as teachers. We were there to reverse the role. We were there to learn." Mattie Wheeler, one of the board members recalls that at first the group needed time to get to know one another. "A lot of times we didn't do a book. We sit there and talk about our problems, how we doin' in school and other stuff like that." "It helps us in meeting peoples and in talking" said another. But gradually they did begin to select publications for the magazine and conducted a contest to select the title.

In the spring of 1988 the first issue of Need I Say More was published with participation from students in the Cape Verdean Community House, Cardinal Cushing Center, the Jackson Mann and Jamaica Plain Community Schools, the Jefferson Park Writing Center, the Haitian Multi-Service Center, Mujeres Unidas en Accion and Project SCALE.

The cover of the anthology sported a black and white reproduction of a painting by Jean Bazile, a Haitian ESL student. His biography along with those of the other contributors, were included on the back pages.

Seeing their work in print was a turning point for the Editorial Committee. They began to believe that, in fact, a teacher wasn't going to step in at the last minute and make the editorial decisions for them. They began to take more seriously the task of reading and selecting stories and poems for publication. This was not without its problems, however, since the reading level of many of the members made it difficult for them to read the increasing volume of material sent in. The group still had to rely on the staff to assist with reading and to do the final typing and submissions to the printer.

At first the group didn't make corrections in the works they selected. They just sent them back to the writers and let them decide how to make them. But over time, one way they got around the reading problem was to invite the authors to the editorial meetings and to have them read their work out loud. The group would then make comments. In some cases reading the story out loud helped the author with surface conventions such as hearing where the commas and periods should go. But increasingly the group has began to direct their attention to issues of tone, style, voice and literary value. "They have begun to exchange criticism, literary criticism," says Kona.

By the time the third issue of Need I Say More had come out, participants in local programs had become eager to meet each other. Teachers had learned about how groups in England held writing weekends and, after British teacher Jane Mace visited Boston, they suggested that the Publishing Project organize one themselves. In early May, 1989 it became a reality. Over two dozen adult new writers spent the weekend writing, reading their work and participating in workshops on Thompson Island, located just outside Boston. Loren McGrail recalls, "That first time we could see the city across the water. It was just far enough away. Close yet distant. They could look back, literally, at their experience." Loren remembers that many people brought their children along.

> A lot of people couldn't have come without that. We learned the violence of the inner-city is such that you don't leave your kids at home. That's one of the things that made them so happy. They knew their kids were safe and knowing that allowed them to feel free to write.

For some, Loren reflected, it was a rare opportunity to get away and a euphoric experience. Alma Santana wrote, "It was there I discovered the beautiful world of writing my inner feelings in a natural, uncomplicated way. . . . If I had not gone to the island, I would have missed a part of myself that I did not know until then" (Need I Say More, Vol.2, No. 2). And Elizabeth Kanze wrote this poem:

> The people are the thinkers of today
> We watch the children play and we danced the night away.
> I wonder if this was the greatest time in my life?
>
> Need I Say More, Vol.2, No.2

When the authors returned from the Writers' Weekend they produced a special issue of Need I Say More, and vowed to plan another weekend for the next year. And, they did. The second writer's weekend was held in Spring, 1990 at Woolman Hill, a Quaker retreat in rural Western Massachusetts. Other activities also began to spin off from the Publishing Project. After Thompson Island, some authors managed to make it to shorter, monthly workshops patterned after the weekend. And, the now "established" authors participated in a new "The Writer in the Classroom" program. Adult learning classes were able to request an author to come to their class to read his or her work and discuss writing with them. Mattie Wheeler, whose story will be told later, was one of those authors who participated in the weekends and as a "writer in the classroom."

Today, just as in the case of Read Write Now, the economic instability of Massachusetts is threatening these projects. The organizers are unsure what the future will bring. They are dedicated to continuing to publish Need I Say More, but other projects they have worked so hard to build - the Writer's Weekend, the Writer in the Classroom project, the monthly Writers' Workshops -may well be curtailed. The authors are working to help

find ways to generate money to keep these projects going, however for many just keeping a roof over their family's head is a formidable undertaking. But they haven't forgotten that:

Thompson Island
was more than
land and ocean.

B.H., Need I Say More, Vol. 2, No. 2

Different Sites: Common Processes

Although each site was very different, there were many aspects of the writing and learning process they shared in common. It is clear that in each case teachers saw interaction as the heart of learning. Many elements of what Arthur Applebee and Judith Langer (1987) describe as instructional scaffolding were apparent in these writing groups, although the teachers rarely used the term scaffolding, more often calling what they did participatory or learner-centered education.

At all the sites teachers encouraged learners to gain ownership over their writing and to feel as if the group belonged to them. They tried to find out what learners wanted to do and to help them to accomplish those goals. At every site I heard teachers admit to me that they didn't begin their work with the writing groups knowing how to foster this sense of ownership. Although they believed in the value of participation, for all of them this was new, uncharted territory. Many learned as they went, continually examining their practice for openings through which the transfer of ownership could take place. This happened through decision-making around writing and publishing and in one case, owning the profits of their work by receiving royalties.

Teachers also tried to make activities appropriate to learners' needs by building on the knowledge and experiences they already had, helping them to accomplish tasks they could not complete on their own and aiming for "not so much at the ripe, but at the ripening functions" (Applebee and Langer, 1987: 14). Teachers at all three sites seemed to emphasize personal writing. In classroom discussions themes also often centered around life experiences

as well, a factor which may have influenced the writing choices of learners. At every site teachers indicated being initially surprised at how much students could do independently when they were engaged in writing for meaning.

Another common element of all the groups was the level of support provided by teachers. Efforts were continually being made to help learners to understand the structure of activities, whether it was the elements of the writing process, the components of publishing or how to make decisions in groups. At every site teachers emphasized the difference between spelling and writing; students got the message that they should "just get the words down" first. One example is provided by Ruth Boise, who remembered this experience at Opening Doors:

> We knew what we wanted to write but how to do it! You know, we're not these big publishers you know. Then somebody got up and got our comments on money, you know, its evil or whatever. And we put it into a story after we were all done to show that what we say every day could be a story.

Collaboration was another element of all the groups. A key difference between these groups and a more traditional school atmosphere was that in no case was learners' work subject to assessment by an external standard. Teachers, in most cases tried to project the image of a member of the group rather than an examiner, and put a strong emphasis on members level of comfort and trust. Sharing food and setting up informal ways to get acquainted through talk was an essential early element of all the groups and contributed to a common sense of "feeling like a family," a concept mentioned by learners at each site. Students were proud of the fact that "we're all writers in this group" including sometimes the teachers.

Internalization was fostered by efforts on the part of teachers to pass control to learners by believing in their capacities, validating their experiences and helping them to become more self-sufficient and interdependent. Many teachers accomplished this sharing of power by encouraging learners to look to each other for help and by putting themselves in the role of learners. Kona expressed a sentiment I heard from many teachers when he said:

> We were there to learn. What we found best for us was for the students type and the teacher type to explore together. Then it comes out equal. . . . There's always the temptation to share what you know. Sometimes its better to share what the learner knows.

Ultimately, the goal of these teachers seemed to be to help learners to become independent writers and thinkers, capable of increasing control of conditions in their lives.

As we will see in the stories found in the next chapter, many other elements outside the classroom were important to the development of the learners' experiences as authors. But in reading the stories of individual authors, it is important to remember that they were written in a large part as a response to ongoing discourses that took place between teachers, authors and fellow students in the writing groups and to remember, as Bahktin tells us in "The Problem of Speech Genres," that:

> Every utterance must be regarded primarily as a *response* to preceding utterances of the given sphere (we understand the word "response" here in the broadest sense). Each utterance refutes, supplements, and relies on the others, presupposes them to be known, and somehow takes them into account. (cited in Slevin, 1988: 3)

CHAPTER V

BECOMING AUTHORS: SIX STORIES

This chapter traces the stories of six of the eighteen people I interviewed: Jose, Lidia and Luther from the Read/Write/Now program, Ruth and Lillian from Opening Doors, and Mattie from the Publishing for Literacy Project. They are woven together from data collected during our interviews, from published and unpublished texts authors shared with me, and to a more limited extent from reflections of their teachers. Although I have fashioned the stories to include certain common elements, my intention was to keep direct interpretation to a minimum, so that their voices can be heard more clearly. In the chapter which follows this one, we will look back on these stories with a more analytical eye.

In reading the narratives the reader may want to especially look for how the authors conceptions of literacy and learning have interacted with their literacy practices over time. How did significant people and events in the authors' childhoods later impact their choices and feelings about learning? In what ways did authors manage literacy tasks within their social networks as adults? How did they find ways to teach themselves informally throughout their lives and in what ways did they recognize, or fail to recognize, this as literacy?

Each author's writing history in the classroom is described more or less chronologically. At the end of each story is a chart which lists the texts authors have written and their dates as closely as we were able to reconstruct them. What authors recall as their audiences for each text, both as it was written and after it was finished, is also listed. In looking at this information you may want to consider how the author's purposes and audiences for writing have changed over time and in interaction with their social contexts. At the end of each story authors reflect on their current conceptions and practices of writing and literacy. These reflections allude to how their current beliefs might influence their plans

for literacy practice for themselves and their families in the future and to outside factors which might constrain their ability to realize those dreams.

Breaking Through the Blocks: Jose's Story

Jose Cruz and I would meet at his kitchen table, the place where he likes to write. From here he can watch pigeons light on the roofs of downtown Springfield fifteen stories below. On the shelf next to the table, scraps of paper jut out of a vinyl notebook; a small dictionary and chewed up pencils lay next to it. His two cats nestle underfoot. This, Jose tells me, is the first apartment he has ever been able to call his own.

In his early forties, Jose is a quiet, soft-spoken man. It wasn't easy for him to talk about his past, but as we met for the interviews, he became committed to the idea of sharing his experiences with the readers of this book. Over the course of this research, in addition to the interviews he wrote me several letters, sometimes sending pieces of his experiences he thought should be included. "I hope it helps somebody," he told me with conviction.

Jose entered the Read/Write/Now Program in September of 1988. The year before he had been forced to quit his job as a welder because of a back injury. He had gone to a rehabilitation skills center but his difficulties with reading and writing made it impossible for him to keep up. On the first day, he recalls, his hands were visibly shaking. "Used to be I didn't know how to read and write but I worked good because of strength and skill of welding. Now I have to get a better job and the jobs now needs for a person to know how to read and write." He was able to get through a basic reading sample, but when he was asked to write something he spent a long time staring at the blank page, and then handed it back. "I just can't" he said softly.

Jose began to read some books and joined a small writing group. One of the first things he tried to write was this description of a partner.

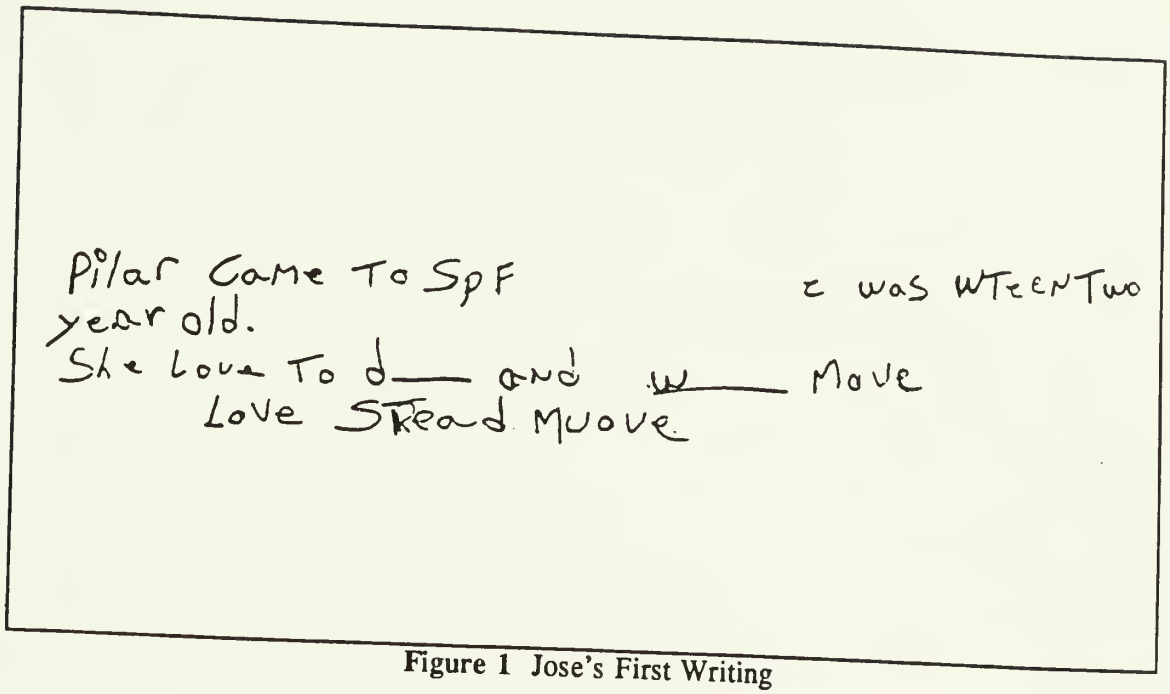


Figure 1 Jose's First Writing

After that, he remembers:

> The first things I used to write was notes, like phone messages, but I never used to finish them. . . . When it comes to writing I get nervous. That's the biggest nerves I get. . . . I'm afraid I don't know how to spell the words. I'm afraid that I don't know what I'm putting down, if the words they sound good or not.

Yet Jose did, cautiously, begin to write a little. His notes were short and he wanted to make sure they were perfect. If he came to a word he didn't know, he told me, he would stop to look it up on a basic word list the teachers provided, or, if it wasn't there, he would wait for a teacher. After a few weeks, he began to answer questions at the end of books he read. That was easier for him, he said, because the story would help him "find the words." Seeing his struggles, Jose's teachers paired him with Maria, a young mother who was in her second semester. Maria listened to Jose, and they wrote back and forth in a "dialogue journal" about their difficulties with writing and, for Jose, his worries about being unemployed and about what the future might bring. Encouraged by her example, he began to worry less about spelling.

After about two months Jose decided to try to write a letter to his mother in Puerto Rico. "I had to," he said. "I usually send her a little bit of something, money, every month." Jose was determined that this time he would not have to ask anyone else to do it for him. He left lines for the words he didn't know and his teachers helped him to fill in the words and to type a final copy onto the computer. "It felt good," he remembered. "Its not a big one, but I write." When it came time for the Christmas issue of the newsletter, people in his class convinced him to try to write something. Finally, sitting next to a teacher, and with a lot of prompting, line by line they got down a chronology of his trip to Puerto Rico. He wrote:

> My brother Lorenzo and I went to Puerto Rico for Thanksgiving. My family lives in the highest town in a mountain in Abonito, Puerto Rico. It has a beautiful view of the mountain. We stayed in my sister Mercedes house. My mother has a house next to Mercedes and my sister Gloria has a house next to Mom. My brother Tonio joined us too. He came from the Bronx, New York City. It made it a great time for Thanksgiving to be with Mom and all the family.

But there were many things about his life Jose remembers he was not ready to share. Alone at home during the day, he would sit and stare out his window, remembering his past, starting to write parts of his life story and then stopping.

> I'd make different topics. . . . Before I'd know it the whole table's full with paper and ah, its pretty good. I try my best and when I finish I feel good but its hard to start. The reason its hard to start is because sometimes I can't spell the word that I really want to put down and I have to switch it to another word I can spell and that makes it sound not so good. . . . I have to force myself.

Jose began to remember his past. Later, during our interviews he described some of those memories to me. He was born, he said, in Puerto Rico, but came to the South Bronx when he was a year old. He grew up with three sisters and five brothers. His mother did her best, but she had to work and wasn't able to be around much. He remembers his stepfather mostly for his drinking. At home there was "a lot of fighting-every single day." Jose knows his mother could read and write. Once when he was twenty two or so he saw her write a letter. And his brothers and sisters learned to read. But Jose had a special

problem. He stuttered. Jose's memories of the other kids laughter continue to haunt him. He used to beg the teacher not to call on him and gave the girls candy to do his work. By the time he was nine or so:

> . . . when my mother used to send me to school I refused completely. I used to run away from people because of my stuttering. I didn't used to go to school because whenever I used to go in class people used to make fun of me. . . . They used to call me nicknames like kaka, gago, mudo and then I'd come out fighting. . . . I used to get up early in the morning and wander out and not come back till night time. . . . I didn't know anything. I just knew I didn't know. I used to respect the other kids that did know. I'd say, "You're smart. Why you playin' hookey with me? You keep goin' to school." I knew that I didn't know and there was no way that I could learn. I felt like that.

But on the street Jose did manage to find friendship and adults who gave him their time. He remembers he used to go from one vendor at the local market to another helping them with their chores. And some of his happiest memories are of a man he met who helped him learn to catch and raise pigeons on the roof of an apartment building. By the time he was twelve, he was skipping school so much that he was sent to court, where a judge sentenced him to a youth house, located in suburban New York.

"Once I got sent to the youth house," he said, "that did it." For Jose, the youth house took him away from his one source of companionship.

> See the people out on the street they used to like me. They used to take care of me. They used to buy me coffee. But in there I didn't have nobody to talk to me. They had speech class there, but it wasn't the right one for me. I couldn't hardly talk. . . . I felt like nobody cared. I couldn't do it. I should have learned when I was a kid. Nobody told me how important it was....The thing was I used to like school but I was afraid, of the other kids, of the teachers.

He became more isolated than ever before. At the end of his three years there, he told me,"I was a street person." Then, "I started messing around with drugs. It took me a lot of years to get out of that. For ten years I was a drug addict." The only writing he did during that period, was to sign his name. But he always wanted to learn. When he was in jail:

> Well, maybe I'd pick up a book or something when I was in jail, my cell mate, he tried to help me but it looked like nothing would come inside. . . . I was lonely. Lonely with nothing.

Finally he was sent to a methadone clinic. But after three years he realized: "What they were doing there was making us worse." So he left the clinic and tried to make it on his own. He tried Chinese acupuncture. He remembers. "They'd treat me there twice a day. I was months and months without sleeping. . . . I was looking for a way out. What really saved me was the switch around to Springfield," he told me. Later, he would write about those events that changed his life.

> When my sister and brother went to visit me in the Bronx they found me with my door open. I was dead drunk. They packed up all my belongings and brought me to Springfield. . . . My life really changed when I came to live in Springfield. I started working on a tobacco farm. I worked for three years on farms. I started going to the Skills Center. I wanted to learn welding. So I did. I was there for one year. My first job was making dumpsters at the Hodge Company in Springfield. That's where I got my experience as a welder. . . . then I got a better job at the Columbia Bicycle Company.
>
> The Kid from the City, 1990

Jose's warmth and quiet character always brought him friends. He found people at work to write sample welding parts lists he could copy. He'd find people, like the man in the elevator, to write letters to include with the checks he sent his mother. Gradually, he remembers his life improving. A real turning point came a few years ago when he met a woman who became part of his life. Things were looking up. Then, in 1987 came his back injury.

All these memories played past him as he sat at home, trying to write. In the beginning, he began to reconstruct his recollections of the good times. Finally he decided to bring his story about flying pigeons into class for help. He published the finished version, "The Good Old Days," in the May, 1989 newsletter:

> Flying pigeons was the best thing in my life when I was 8 years old. Since that time I always had pigeons in N.Y.C. In the years between 1955 and 1970 I had over one thousand five hundred flying from the roof. I had the best and biggest stock on the block.

> Almost everybody in the neighborhood had pigeons flying. Sometimes we had war with the boys from the other neighborhood. We used to catch their pigeons and wring their necks, then we returned them. Sometimes we would fight. When I left N.Y.C. some of the guys were married and they all still had pigeons.
>
> I moved to Springfield and I brought two pigeons with me. But it wasn't like the Bronx. I couldn't have pigeon coops here. The landlords didn't allow pigeons on the roof or on the porch. The day I will have my own home I will have pigeons again.
>
> Turning Our Lives Around, Vol. 1, No. 2
> May, 1989

Rehearsing topics for writing had led Jose to think more about his old neighborhood. He went back, with camera in hand, hoping to recapture his past. That experienced moved him to write another piece for the newsletter. He wrote:

> I was very surprised when I saw my old neighborhood. All the buildings and trees were gone. It looked like a desert. In some parts all the buildings were burnt out. I couldn't believe in twenty years everything got destroyed. I went to the chicken and meat markets to take pictures. Now they are only two old buildings and they looked like skeletons. . . . I couldn't believe my eyes. I felt very sad. There was nothing to remember in my neighborhood.
>
> Turning Our Lives Around, Vol. 1, No.3
> (May, 1989)

Later, Jose would write other pieces about that period in his life:

> My dearest friend, Mrs. Decker, owned a chicken market. I was really special for her. She used to send me to get her coffee and doughnuts and something special for me. From there I used to get to the meat market. . . . The people there used to like me a lot and I came home loaded with meat. I was only 9 years old and carrying a lot of boxes.
>
> The Kid from the City, 1990

Throughout the next year Jose received a lot of encouragement from his girlfriend, who loved to read and write and helped him to get out more letters to his mother and family members. Sometimes he would spend six or seven hours on a single letter. After his birthday he wrote to a teacher:

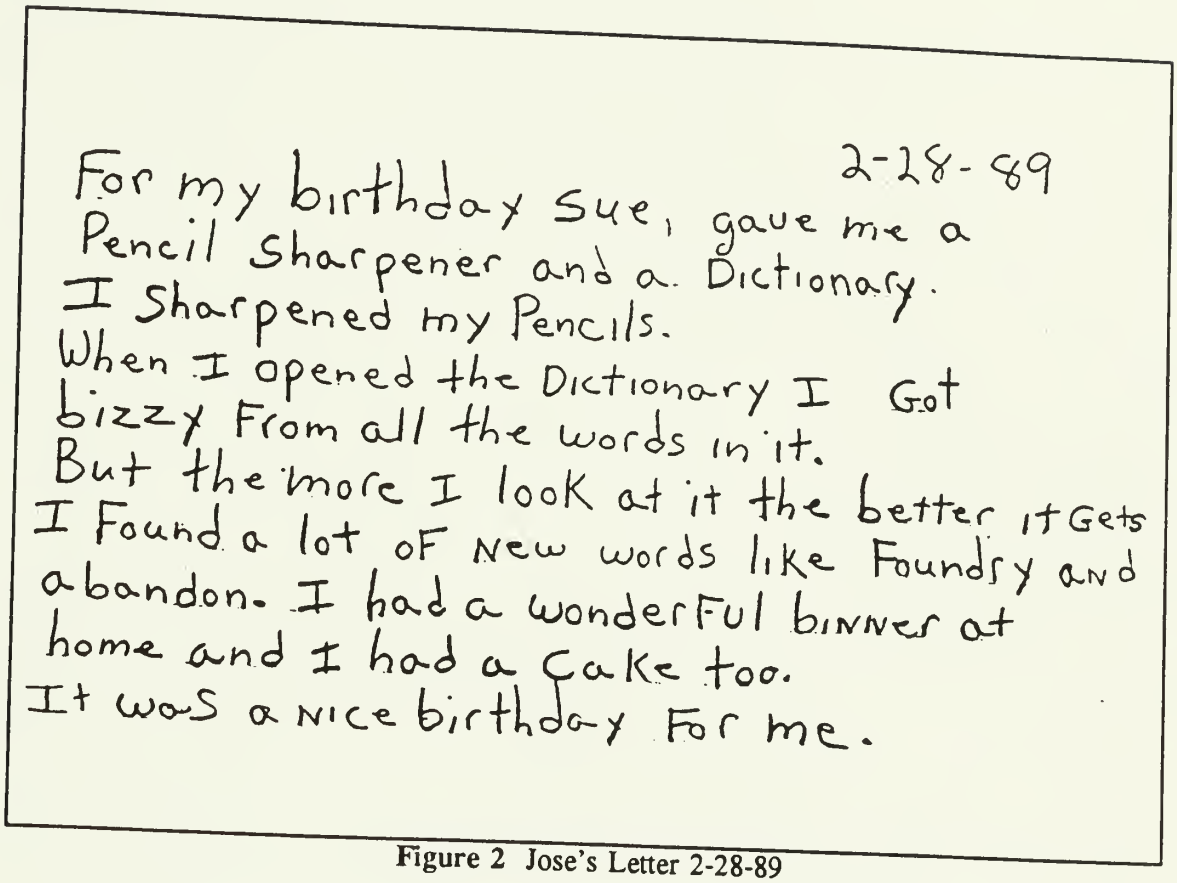


Figure 2 Jose's Letter 2-28-89

More pieces of his story began to come out, including the difficult issues such as his stepfathers's drinking problem, his move to Springfield, and the time his brother got stabbed by a drug addict in the Bronx, a story he titled "What Drugs Do to People." Slowly he began to bring them into class, always wishing the teachers had more time to spend with him, always in the back of his mind afraid someone might laugh at his work. Only rarely would he share his stories with the group. But, "as time passed I started feeling more comfortable with the teachers and myself," he said. His teacher recalls that:

> Its been consistent now. He's always here. I think last summer for him was kind of a breakthrough. Maria was still here and they were writing back and forth to each other. I think he just started to gain some confidence, feeling pretty strong and growing. You know its back and forth. There were some days he was nervous and thinking that he doesn't know anything again. I think generally its a cycle and it comes back. And he just keeps asking for the message that he's OK. That he can do it. And everybody just keeps

> giving him the message. Its kind of working in increments. . . . His skill level is higher than he thinks it is. But there's been quite a jump with his reading and writing. Last summer there was definitely a breakthrough....He's challenging himself with his reading. There's writing. He does see himself as someone who can tell a good story. He's just beginning.

That summer, two years after he started, he and his teacher pieced together some of his life stories into a book. Not a book to be shared. A book just for him, xeroxed with an illustration on the front and an orange cover. The Kid from the City, he called it. "I don't think he would have consented before," his teacher said. "And when he saw it he was really encouraged."

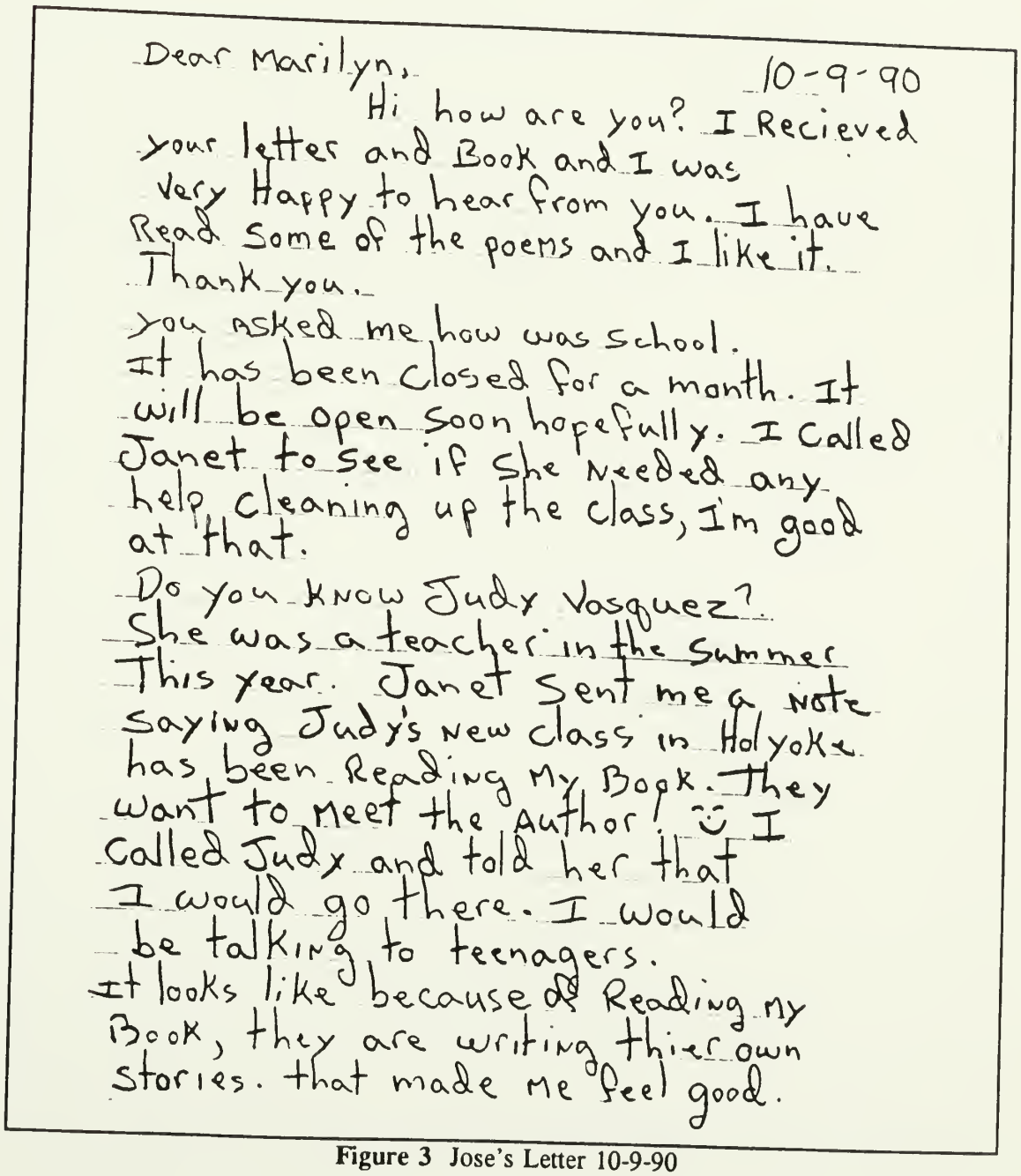
When Jose and I first met for interviews he was in the middle of a new story:

> I enjoy watching this lady. . . . She's got a very special spot where she feeds the squirrels. . . . I call this lady, she's just like spring. . . . And I was sitting here by the window and I picked up a pencil. . . . I made a lot of changes and they were real, real good. I changed the color of her clothes. I added more, the way she wears her hat, the way she's always smiling. I want to finish it. Its a good story. But I stopped. I don't know why. Sometimes I pick up a pencil and its hard. . . . I enjoyed to write it because I wanted people to know about it, because its so neat. But it just comes out a little and then I stop.

When I asked Jose about his views of writing, his responses varied. On one occasion he told me, "I believe a person who could spell the words real good; who knows how to tell a story correct. That's what makes a good writer." But later, when he told me about his new story he said, "You know writing is more fun than reading. I think writing is an art." "It takes to believe in yourself," he said about becoming a writer. He gave this advice to others.

> Find yourself a good class and get yourself comfortable. That's more important than learning to read and write. Usually people that can't read and write, they like to hide away. It's very uncomfortable. It don't happen, but you feel like the people are laughing, the kids are laughing. It's not easy to go to school as an adult. Most people don't understand that.

During the summer, one of Jose's teachers, who was working at a special program for teenagers asked if she could take Jose's book to the school to show her students. Jose agreed. He told me about it in one of his letters:



Dear Marilyn, 10-9-90

Hi how are you? I Recieved your letter and Book and I was very Happy to hear from you. I haue Read some of the poems and I like it. Thank you.

You asked me how was school. It has been closed for a month. It will be open soon hopefully. I called Janet to see if she needed any help cleaning up the class, I'm good at that.

Do you know Judy Vasquez? She was a teacher in the Summer This year. Janet sent me a note saying Judy's new class in Holyoke has been Reading My Book. They want to meet the Author! ☺ I called Judy and told her that I would go there. I would be talking to teenagers. It looks like because of Reading my Book, they are writing thier own stories. that made me feel good.

Figure 3 Jose's Letter 10-9-90

Jose dreams of moving to Florida, of having a family and getting a job "I could retire from." And, if his health continues to improve, he feels like he could do it.

> I figured if I had a job right now and I had to use reading and writing, I figure that would be good for me. I think I could learn real fast. . . . the words are different, this one is like a story, part of my life, but ah, on the job its different writing but I think I could use it because there's a lot of words I know how to spell.

Although he now believes he can do it, he told me he is frustrated by the lack of opportunities to study. Read/Write/Now is the only program in the area he feels meets his needs, and right now classes are only available to him four hours a week. "If there were a program five days a week, I would be there, every single day. . . . If I could go to school more time," he told me, "I could completely relearn."

Date	Composition	Author Stated Audience/Reader
Fall 1988	practice notes/messages	teacher
	answer questions at end of books	teacher
	letter	Mother/teacher
	dialogue journal	classmate/teacher
	begins life story at home	self
	"My Thanksgiving in Puerto Rico"	teacher/newsletter
Spring 1989	personal writing at home	self/girlfriend
	dialogue journal at school	classmate/teacher
	thank you letter	girlfriend/teacher
	"The Good Old Days:	self/later in newsletter
	"Changes in New York City"	self/for newsletter
Fall 1989	letters	mother/sisters/teacher
	personal writing at home	self/girlfriend/teacher edits
	dialogue journal at school	teacher/classmates
	"How I Came to Springfield"	self/later in newsletter
Spring 1990	A Kid from the City- collected life stories	stories xeroxed into personal book shared with family/later with high school students
Summer 1990	story of woman and squirrels untitled	written with plan to publish in newsletter
	personal writing (e.g. about homeless)	self
	letter writing	family/girlfriend/friends
	self-description	written to author as part of this study

Figure 4 Jose's Composing History

Knowing I Matter: Lidia's Story

Lidia Nubile was one of the first learners at Read/ Write/Now. During our interviews, we also met in her kitchen, a busy place with big jars of Italian beans soaking on the counter and tins of fragrant pastries. Black and white pictures of families from the old country and color pictures of recent weddings smiled down from the walls. Next to the phone was a note pad full of penciled messages, many of them obviously Lidia's, old greeting cards and a marked up calendar. Lidia's sons and daughters, her husband and sometimes her day care children ran in and out as we talked.

Lidia told me she was born in 1939 in Italy. Her childhood was not easy. Her family lived in two rooms with no electricity or running water. During those early years of her life, her father was sent off to war. Her family was forced by the German soldiers to live in a cave and her mother died of tuberculosis. Lidia started to school after the war but her family couldn't afford to buy the books, the paper or the right clothes. Lidia remembers the other children, and even the teachers, making fun of her and of her sister. They had to walk to school. When they were late they played hookey. "We were afraid to go in. The teacher had this stick from the desk, boom over our head." One day their father found them playing outside and took them out of school. Lidia was nine. She began to take care of sheep and later to pick grapes and olives.

When Lidia was fifteen, her family moved to the United States in search of a better life. She hoped her own dream of going back to school would now come true. Later she would write of this experience:

> My Aunty Mary told me that I had to be 18 to go to work. I was so happy! Because all my life I wanted to go to school and have an education just like everybody else. But when I told my father what my aunt had told me, he said, "You are going to work!" I told him you have to be 18 to work. He told me, "You keep on looking for a job until you find one."

> I knew that my father needed money, because he was the only one working. And there were seven of us to feed and dress. . . . I found a job at a slip shop, working as a floor lady.
>
> "The Beginning of a New Life in America" in Different Worlds, Same Secret, 1990

As a young adult Lidia continued to want to learn to read and write. Twice she started night school, but each time something got in the way. Her sister got laid off. Then, her father had an aneurism and she had to find a way to make more money. She already worked from seven to three making nightgowns. But she found a job from three to eleven at night making summer chairs. Lidia wrote:

> Eventually, my father got well, the bills got paid, and I quit the second job at night. But I never went back to night school. My sister got married to Tony and she was so happy. Seeing my sister happily married, all of my goals changes. I started to think of saving money to get married. . . .
>
> "The Beginning of a New Life in America", 1990 Different World, Same Secret, 1990

In 1959, Lidia married Sergio Nubile. During the years that followed they had five children and put them all through school. Sergio worked days and she worked nights in a sewing factory so one of them would always be home with the kids. Yet in spite of her successes, Lidia still was haunted by her inability to read and write.

> It becomes like something you want so bad all your life and could never get. You could have all the things in the world. The worst part of it is, it wasn't the people around me that made me feel that way, it was me. It was me. And that's what people have to do. They have to deal with themselves. . . . I was so easily intimidated by people with an education. I was even intimidated by my eldest daughter.

Lidia attributes two things to helping her decide to make a change, her growing self confidence as a parent and her involvement with her church. She remembers at that time:

> I discovered by myself that maybe I had something to give but I didn't know how to get it out. Before I used to feel like I had nothing to give and I would say, "Why did God make me if I had nothing to give? . . . But then when I got my own kids I wanted to matter to them. I wanted to be the mother I didn't have. . . . I never blamed my parents for nothing. They only could give what they have. But I wanted to make a dent in somebody's life. . . . So then I left the factories. I didn't want to work in the factories any more

> because I was sick and tired to talk to myself and feel that the machine was so cold. Twenty-four machine here, twenty-four machine there. I didn't like the people there. Other people thought they were better than me. . . . So anyway, what I said, what I'm gonna do, I'm gonna make a change in my life and I'm gonna do something that's gonna matter to people. So many unwanted kids.

So Lidia went to a local agency and got a job running a small day care center out of her house. She got help with the paper work she had to do. But as her sense of her own abilities grew, so did her determination to learn to read and write. She used her work at the day care as a way to teach herself. She remembers:

> So I said, I'm gonna start with the ABC's. I'm gonna get the children and I'm gonna pretend I'm teaching them but I'm gonna teach myself. I'm gonna look through their eyes and see what really makes them happy. I watched Sesame Street, Mr. Rogers. . . . And I started with a picture dictionary and I'd say, this is the word that goes with A. It became like a game. The more I did it, the more it became alive in my mind.

Eleven years passed and Lidia got better and better at reading. But writing was another story. She was able to get down notes for herself or her family, and sometimes, when she had something on her mind, she'd try writing a letter. But it was difficult for anyone else to make them out. She still had to depend on others to do her "public" writing. With the kids she learned to spell at little, but:

> . . . so I'm gonna have to add on say A-T; add B, BAT. To do that is easy, but if I want to write more there's so many missing letters and I said, maybe its because I never learned the law. How you're supposed to do it. Because in Italy the sound is always the same. . . . Speaking. I could express speaking. But if they'd say, put down on this piece of paper what you are trying to tell me, all of a sudden you become blank. All of a sudden its like this image you had, its all erased to like, "OK you are nothing." That's the only way I could express it because it happens so many times. . . . It's like one piece of the puzzle and it becomes the most important piece of the puzzle that makes the picture complete.

Lidia looked for three years for a program. At a school near her home they tested her in reading. Her self-instruction had paid off. She tested almost at the high school level.

"If you know how to read this well, you must know how to write," they told her, and sent her away without taking a writing sample.

> Then I kept seeing these ads all the time, learn to read, to read. And I got really mad. They put so much emphasis on reading, what about the writing part? . . . I wanted to be able to write notes to parents. . . . I couldn't even read what I wrote down half the time. Like right away I remember what I put down but two days later or something I'll read it and I'll say, "What in the world am I trying to say?"

Lidia found out about Read/Write/Now before the first semester it opened. When she came in for an interview, the teachers, too, were skeptical that she would qualify for the program. But, when asked to provide a writing sample, the writing displayed on the next page is what she gave them.

Lidia had many reasons for wanting to write. She needed to be able to send notes home to the parents of her day care children and fill out her own monthly reports. Also, she wanted to write letters and to be able to take notes at church meetings. But when the teachers introduced the idea of writing a life story she immediately wanted to try. "It was like she was ready to do this when she walked in the door," her teacher said.

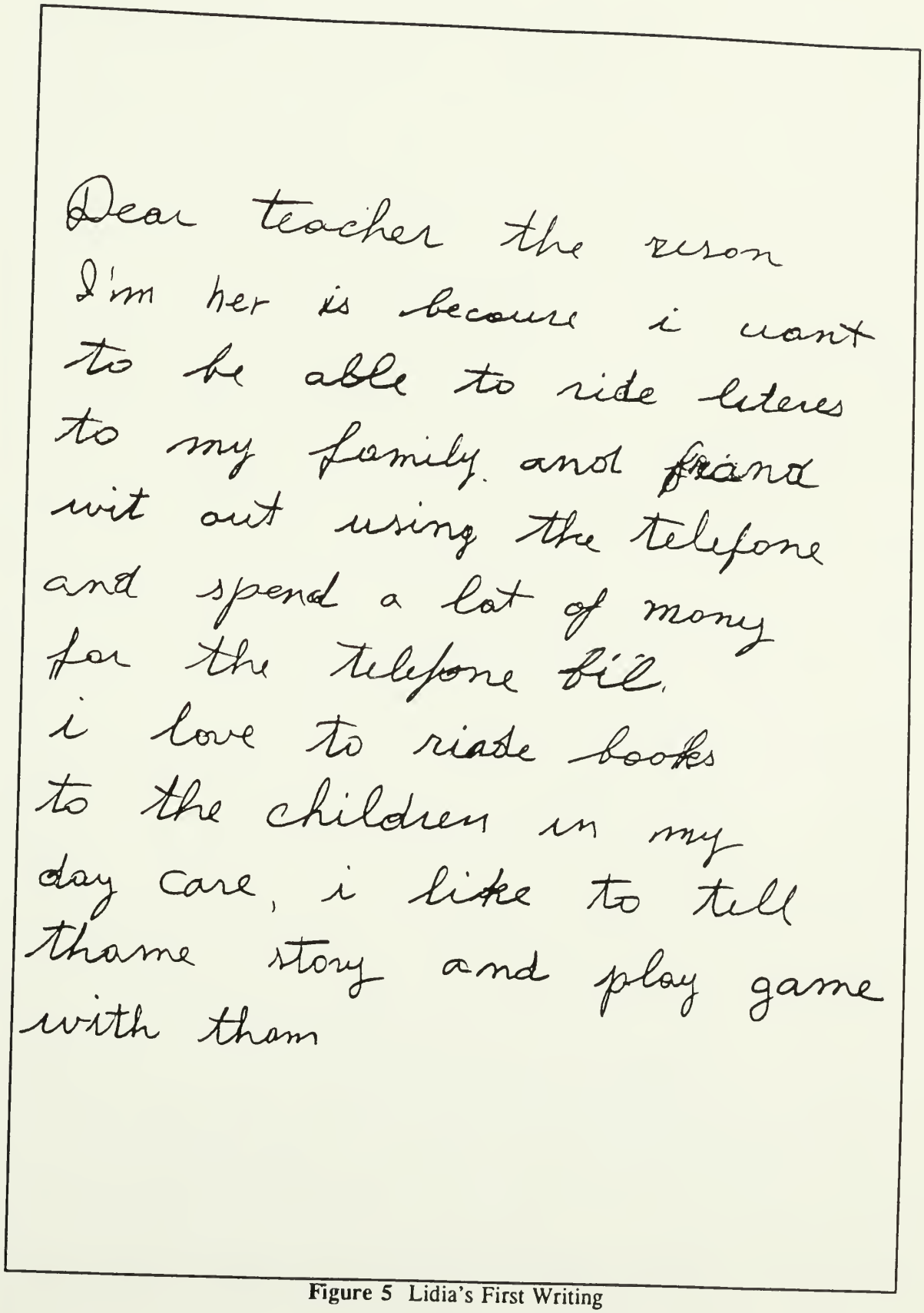


Figure 5 Lidia's First Writing

In our interviews Lidia told me she had "rehearsed" her story many times in the past. "In the very beginning it was Nathaniel (her youngest son) in my mind. I always used to tell him stories. He'd say, 'tell me a story about the little girl from Italy.' It was like a game every time we went in the car." Lidia thought writing her story would help all her children to understand her better. She sat down and poured out these first words:

> I was born in Italy in 1939, in the middle of the depression and in the middle of the war. I was the third child; beside me I had my big brother and a big sister. At the time I was born my father was in a war in South Africa. It was during the war that my father got shot wounded and later in prison. My grandmother was living with use, because my mother was sick.
>
> We lived in a little town called Lettomanoppello (a province of Pescara, Italy. We had a very small house consisting of two rooms with no running water and no electricity. But even that was taken away from us by the German soldiers. And we were forced to live in a cave, along with two other families, a donkey and some sheep.
>
> My Life in the Old Country, 1988

Lidia took easily to the idea of using invented spelling. Although every other word she wrote was misspelled, she kept on going, writing pages a day. For a few days she wrote by hand and copied it onto the computer. But soon, when she realized how she could edit the text on the computer, she started to type the story right onto the screen.

> I remembered Italy. Everything came flashing back. . . . I found out if you put it down on paper all those little pieces you never thought about start to come back. This one bring back this. And that one bring back that. And it made me go back almost to the beginning to understand myself even more . . . and I would not have done that if I hadn't come to Read/ Write/Now.

Lidia began to remember her feelings of the past in detail, as if she were there:

> I remember my father coming up the stairs. It felt like the steps of a giant, the closer he came the more I was trembling. Then he looked at me and I looked at him, scared as a mouse. Then he looked at my cousin Maria; then he looked at my cousin Anna. He looked at her and picked her up in his arms. All of a sudden I felt so bad inside, I leaned against the wall and slid down on the floor and started to cry. I said to him, "I am your daughter."
>
> My Life in the Old Country, 1988

And she wrote about how her mother became sicker and sicker with tuberculosis:

> I wanted to hug her, kiss her, and tell her I wanted to take care of her the way she used to take care of me when I was sick. I would plead with her and say, "Don't you love me anymore?" She would say to me, "It is because I love you that I don't want you close to me." For a five year old girl, hearing those words used to make me feel rejected. . . . On December 24, 1945 my dearest mother died.
>
> My Life in the Old Country, 1988

As she wrote about her mother, Lidia began to uncover another unanticipated purpose for her writing. Writing helped her to recall and reconnect with her mother, who had died.

> Another puzzle in my life was that when I was five years old my mother died. . . . So it was a void of my mother. So it was an opportunity not just to relate it to my kids but also to get in touch with my mother again. . . . Its like just thinking about my mother made me cry. I loved her so much and she was taken away from me. . . . Its like I used to say to my kids, "If you can't talk, write it down. Its important to get it out where you can see it. Whatever it is that you have inside, take it out."

December came and went and Lidia was still working on the same story. She attended short workshops on spelling and punctuation. "At the same time I was writing I was learning to spell," she said. Her teachers suggested she stop to revise and edit what she had written before going on. Her work was one very long running story, without paragraphs and often without sentences. On one occasion a teacher remembers, "I was trying to help her figure out where to put the periods in the part about her mother. When I looked up, she was crying. And I knew she just needed to finish the story."

After Christmas, Lidia's husband bought her a computer and during the winter she wrote at home as well as at school. By late spring she was done--all of her life up to coming to the United States. Then came the slow work of working with teachers to make sentences; then paragraphs; then chapters then titles for the chapters. Eventually, when Lidia had done all she could, her teachers did a good bit of final editing and formatted the text so it could be pasted up into her book, along with photos she brought from home and pictures she xeroxed

from library books. Her husband, her kids and her brother came to a celebration that May. Each one got a copy of her book. Lidia recalls:

> My children were the first to read it. They cried. In bits and pieces they knew a lot. They said when they read it that they could put themselves in my shoes, they could understand me when I got hurt. My children's friends. They all read it. They wanted copies. They wanted to read it to their kids. And I really didn't understand why they wanted it. . . . And I said, "Why did they cry? Why did they come back to me, "Oh I want you to finish the book, I want you to finish!"

Over the summer of 1988, Lidia did begin to write the rest of her story, about what happened after she came to the United States. But she began to get sick and by fall she was forced to drop out of the program. For over a year and a half she was in and out of doctors' offices. All she could manage was to run the day care, with the help of her daughter. Although she started to write more letters to friends and for the day care center, she didn't do any more narrative writing.

In the spring of 1990, Read/Write/Now called her. They had gotten their grant for the special series of writers' workshops and, since they were only once a week, they thought Lidia might be interested. Her health still wasn't so good, but she decided she would try to make it. Once again, she knew right away what she wanted to write, "I had my heart set on it," she said. She wrote about the birth of her youngest son, about her health problems at that time, about how her faith had gotten her through the pregnancy, about her love for her son and about her beliefs about abortion. This time her stories went faster and she was able to write with less assistance.

When her son's story was "out of her system," she went back and finished the one she had started, now almost two years ago, about her life once she arrived in the United States from Italy. During those months, she also went back to another unfinished theme. Before one of our interviews, Lidia and I went to her writing workshop together. Some women writers from a housing project in Chicopee came that day. They put some "found" objects in the middle of the room, and all of us picked something and wrote about it. Lidia chose a green bottle, and, once again, evoked the memory of her mother. She later

published it in Different Worlds: Same Secret as the poem, "The Green Bottle With the Special Cap."

The minute I saw the bottle
it brought back memories.

I remember the first time my mother
brought home a bottle of Gassoso, or soda.

I loved that bottle and the design of it,
Then she gave me the bottle and said,
"That's a special treat for you!"

That was the first time I'd tasted soda
And every time I see this kind of bottle
it brings back the taste of the soda
and the very special treat my mother gave me.

She didn't know how much that
meant to me, and how much I loved it.

My mother is dead now, and
it's been about 45 years since she
gave me that first bottle of soda.

But the beautiful memory of it
is very alive in my mind.

I can hear the sound it made
when I opened it.
I can see the gas come out
of the bottle like smoke.

The bubbles inside the bottle and
the very special taste in my mouth,
a taste that was never to be duplicated,
never the same again.

Different Worlds: Same Secret, 1990

"What did you learn by writing?" I asked Lidia. This is what she told me:

> I learned that I matter. I learned that no matter what happened as a child, you live through it. If you go through those trials and tribulations that is an education in itself that you wouldn't understand if you didn't go through it. . . . It wasn't just the ability to write. . . . It was the image of myself. I'm not just a little grain anymore. You know that grain went down inside the ground and died but there is a plant that came out and is sprouting again, is going through branches. It's as if I've know all along and I thought, "why did I think I was just a seed when I'd done so much in life without reading and writing?". . . You have to break free to

> form yourself and say, "'It' doesn't matter. Hey, I matter. My voice matters."

And, she said, she had also learned that writing wasn't as much a "law" as an "idea you have to express." Once Lidia discovered these things, she told me, she was determined to teach what she knew to others. At home and at church she helped people who didn't know how to read to look more closely at all the things they could do. On one or two occasions, she said, she was able to convince a friend to go back to school. A woman from church wasn't convinced at first:

> "But you don't understand. You were never black. You were never from the ghetto. You don't know what it feels like not to have food in your belly." And I says, "Oh yes, I do understand." So then I got the book and I brought it and I said, "Read this." So she read that and she cried. She said her kids wanted her to stop reading it. . . . To her it was like, "No, let me finish reading it." She couldn't go to sleep until she read it all. She called me in the morning, she says, "Maybe I do make a difference. You do understand."

Lidia is writing a little more now--a few more letters, notes at church, even sometimes to parents. She thinks sometimes of writing children's stories, if there is ever another writing workshop. With her health, though, "you can never tell what the future will bring." "Do you see yourself as a writer" I asked her. She told me:

> Something tells me I am, but then I don't think so. I didn't have self esteem and when you don't have self-esteem you see things in black and white. You don't see things in color. . . . It's not bad to feel important, but you have to be balanced.

Lidia still makes a lot of mistakes when she writes, but she told me she learned what she needed to know the most, that it isn't the writing itself, but the wisdom that matters.

> Now at the age of 51 I thank the Creator that I went through all that. It made me a better person. It made me stronger I think. I think it refines you.

2-28-91

My advice for students is come out of their hiding place which is ourselves.
Put yourself in front of a mirror and Look at yourself. You Look just Like everyone else - two arms, two Legs. one body, two eyes, two ears one mouth, one Nose, Right? Stop Looking down at yourself. stop judging yourself. Stop hurting yourself by saying how domb your are just because you don't know how to read and write. but instead really Look at yourself for all the other things you do so well and especially for your common sense, which is for you an Extra sense that we rely on so much. The people with a high education Lack common sense. because they don't have to rely on common sense. And some of them Lack compassion and fellow feeLing. They cannot put themselves in someone eLse's position. Look at the person you see in the mirror and say you do so many things and you do them well. One other thing you got to do it. And do it now. Find yourseLf a program Like Read Write Now and go Let them help you to read and write. Because you can do it! You got everything it takes. The only thing you need is motivation. You got to tell yourself, "Yes I can and I will do it and I will do it now"

Figure 6 Lidia's Letter 2-28-91

Date	Composition	Author Stated Audience/Reader
Fall Spring 1987- 1988	My Life in the Old Country life story	self/children locally published as book after publication shared with relatives, friends of children, people at church, other learners
Summer 1988	"Beginnings of a New Life in America" life story-interrupted by illness	self/family
Summer 1990	"The Green Bottle" Narrative/poem	self/participants in writing workshops; later reworked into poem and published in anthology Same World: Different Secrets distributed to libraries, humanities council
Summer 1990	Nathaniel: A Gift from God story of birth of son	produced in xerox book form as gift for son/shared with family/friends
	"Beginnings of a New Life in America" completion of story began summer, 1988	self/family published in Different World: Same Secret .

Figure 7 Lidia's Composing History

I Woulda Wanted to be a Writer: Luther's Story

Luther drove up to the McDonald's on State Street in his Chevy Blazer. We went inside but it was hot and noisy. "I got an idea," he told me. We drove to a little park on the border of Springfield and walked till we found a shady acorn tree. Across the lawn families were cooking hot dogs and children were chasing footballs. When we sat down Luther told me:

> I always get alone when I'm recording my stories. I come out here, I go to Forest Park, I go to a place I used to go fishing at and then I set and look across the water. Then I can blank everything outa my mind before I start recordin'-- tryin' to remember about some of the things in my past. Back them days.

Luther was one of the most basic readers to first come to Read/Write/ Now. The only thing he could write was his name. But he remembers always having the impulse to write stories:

> When I was a kid I used to go to places like this, a park or something like that. I'd just set down and write stories. Like in my head. Yeah, in my head. Even though I couldn't read it or write, but I knew what I wanted to say. I'd see a lot of things go wrong, you know. I'd write about it in my mind. . . . And I'd say, "That's gonna be good.". . . I coulda been somebody. I definitely woulda wanted to be a writer. That would be my dream.

Luther grew up in the little town of Brook Haven, Mississippi, with his mother and seven brothers and sisters. His mother worked two jobs and was rarely able to be at home. But one thing she did teach him was to cook and they went to the Baptist church together on Sundays. As far as school:

> When I first started I got to about second grade. Then I really started to have problems about readin' and writin.' Me, I was real slow on learning. The teachers back then they don't work with you as fast as they would if people knew how to read. . . . There was always one teacher in the class workin' with oh twenty-five or thirty kids in a room. . . . Most the time I just set there an' played with my pencil. Sometimes I used ta act up in class - get attention or somethin' like that. Later, I'd get in trouble and had to sit behind the black board. . . . Lets say you be in there an hour, two hours. Then I'd be sent to the next class. So the

> school year would end they'd pass me right on anyway. I got up to about the 10th grade.

When Luther wanted to find out about something, he would always go over to his grandmother's house, about a mile away. "I'm the only one was real close," he said.

> I talked to my grandmother about stayin' out a trouble cause she knew about the trouble I used to get into. When I go on a trip the first place I go was to see my grandmother. I had to see her. . . . She's the kind of old lady I used to say, "Grandma, when you die I want you to come back and tell me about the other world?" Cause I always was interested in the other world and stuff like that. So she said, "I'll tell you what I do. When I die I'll take you with me." I said, "No, grandmama." So she always laugh about it. I was real close to her. . . . Until the day she died. . . . I mighta been thirteen.

Two years later Luther dropped out of school. He remembers:

> About that time the jobs was easy to get. So I got a job working for the telephone company. You didn't but have to write your name. Just sign your name and your social security number down and you could start right to work.

When he was seventeen Luther's principal offered to help him get into a trade school in Arizona. "I quit the phone company and went to trade school cause I wanted to learn," he said. But:

> It seemed like the same thing. There's nobody workin' with you and you got about 40, 50 people in the classroom. . . . Back then I was a football player. I was good. I learned a sheet that would tell you the plays. I learned all the moves. I knew defensive end and I got good at it. I ended up makin' the captain of the team. . . . So I had some guys, friends...tell me the answer on the tests. . . . And I knew about mechanics. I can pull apart a motor and put it back together. I learned that when I was a kid. That's how I got through it and stuff. But still after a while I found out I wasn't no better than I was in the beginning because I was cheatin' and I still didn't know nothin'. I got my ...tifcate [certificate] for the first two years, mechanics. Then the place closed down. So then I came to Springfield and I been up here ever since.

"The only time I did any writing was when I signed my check," he said Or I was writin' somebody's phone number down." " How did you keep track of whose number it was?" I asked him? Luther laughed:

> When I was messin' around with the girls? I kept 'em in the hub cap. Let's say I'm datin' one girl. I would take that number and put it in my hubcap. And let's say there was another girl Linda. I would take it and put it in my glove compartment. And another one I would take it and put it in my spare tire.

During those years Luther married, had three kids and later separated from his wife. He figured out how to pass the driver's test and got his license. Over the years he worked at many jobs--driving an ice cream truck, cooking, maintenance at a nursing home. He now works as a maintenance person at a bakery. "I always did want to go to school I just didn't have the courage," he said. He did finally try going to one but they just gave him a workbook to work on by himself. "It was just like in school. You ain't got nobody to work with ya." After three months he dropped out.

Luther's teenaged daughter was the one who talked Luther into trying again. So, in the fall of 1987, he went to Read Write Now.

> I turned around a couple times before I came in there. And I was scared. But I had to learn how to get over that fear, I said, "Well, OK, try this one, maybe its good for you. Give it a shot. Find out what its all about."

One of the first things Luther wanted to do was to learn to read work orders from the bakery. For several weeks his job became the topics for language experience stories and very basic word recognition lessons. When Luther saw others in the class writing about their lives, he wanted to try that too, but felt he couldn't. His teachers gave him a tape recorder. He took it home and taped a story he says he first "wrote in his head" when he was eighteen. It was about his grandmother and the guardian angel.

> About that time we got a call at about eight o'clock that night and found out my grandmother was in the hospital. . . . 9:30 next morning she died. Two months later I missed her and I got on my knees and prayed to see her again. . . . That's when the sky got so dark. It seemed like a little, small thing coming out of the sky. As it got closer it got bigger and bigger. As I got closer to my window, it was like two big long wings. . . . I know it was my grandmother.
>
> Little Boy and the Hobo Man, 1988

A few weeks later Luther taped a much longer piece, three typed pages about the time he ran away from home and spent time with a hobo. "It would be about my life so people out in the world can read about it," he said about his audience. Luther would sit next to a teacher and slowly they would transcribe the tape and read it together. Along with his reading lessons, it took him months to finish. It was not until the summer that it was published, complete with illustrations drawn by one of the part time teachers. At the end, he wrote:

> I'm tryin' to learn how to publish a book--to write about some of the things about my life. My teacher told me that the way a lot of writers started off, by writin' about some of things in their past. . . . I'm gettin' to learn more about it. I record the things I'm gonna say, then I go over and check to see its right. I've been thinkin' of names, a title for my book, if I'll be able to publish it. I finally came up with one, The Little Boy and the Hobo Man. But I still got a long way to go. This is just the first step. Now I got to reach for the second step.
>
> Little Boy and the Hobo Man, 1988

During this period, Luther begun to think more about composing. Everywhere he went he saw stories. That March, he took a bus to New York City. He spent four hours between buses walking around the Bronx. After he got back on the bus "I just set back and thought s'pose that was me." That night, when he got home, he stayed up till three in the morning taping. Part of what his teachers transcribed included these words:

> A place I went to visit. New York. New York City. It was a place that people was comin' outa ol' tore down houses, who never had a place to go, not even a place to stay. Now they're bein' kicked out. They come out with their hands on their heads. People tellin' them they can't stay there. But where they gonna live? Somebody tell me, what is America? The government sayin' God Bless America. The president sayin' God Bless America. . . . Sometimes I wonder to myself when is the world gonna stop and look aback at the people who suffer? They ain't never been there so how would they know? How would they know 'bout makin' a few dollars to try to buy somethin' to feed the kids with, cause there ain't nothing but a can of beans an' a can of sardines?

That summer Luther tried his hand at fiction. Over several months he composed what he later titled "Akeem, A Little Black Boy from Africa Who Couldn't Read or Write"

on his tape recorder. Together Luther and his teacher transcribed it and revised the story. They changed the names of the characters and worked at making the technology mentioned in the story consistent with the time period. In the story Akeem stows away on a ship bound for New York City, learns to read and returns to Africa to start his own school:

> Remembering that those who fear darkness, live in darkness; those who see light, reach light and the stars shine brighter, Akeem devoted his whole life to teaching and eventually had a school named after him--the Akeem Learning Center. In all his 85 years, Akeem never forgot his experience in the great land of America.
>
> "Akeem, A Little Black Boy from Africa Who Couldn't Read or Write", 1988

Luther got a lot of encouragement. His book was shared with a group of visiting African literacy teachers. "We'd like to do this in our country," they told him and shared with him stories of the real Africa. A newspaper reporter included him in her story about successful students. And, he began to use his writing to give advice to others, especially to his children. "The best thing to do is try to get your education first," he wrote to his son. "And then find a good job. And then worry about a girl and a family. That way you will be more secure."

But, in some ways, his teachers remember, taping and language experience made the gap between the "first step" of telling his stories and the "second step" of learning to write independently seem even wider. Luther was still having a hard time reading independently or writing even a sentence without help. Over the next year, he began to concentrate more on basic reading. But he still resisted writing, preferring to use the tape recorder instead. His teachers tried having him respond in a dialogue journal, but Luther found it difficult. "It's a pattern," his teacher admitted, frustrated.

> He'll tell me this great story and I'll say, "Luther, why don't you write it down" and he'll just get sort of upset with me that I'm suggesting it. "But I can't spell it." So we'll go round and round again about invented spelling. If he could just let that in he'd progress faster. When the program was open enough for him to come consistently, he was making consistent progress. He was writing sentences. He's continued to read, but the writing has slid back. . . . I think the taping was very motivating for him but I think right at that point we should have said, "Now write!" because now

> he's developed this alternative strategy that's meeting some of his needs for self-expression. I think we have to talk to him about how he'd have to pay for transcription fees...it's not realistic.

Luther has continued to tape his stories. During our interviews he brought along a new tape, dealing with the issue of how families aren't as close as they used to be. And, he still wants to finish his tape about New York City. Going over it on the tape recorder, he said:

> It's not done. I got a lot of little stories I got to put together. . . . You know I think about that story I was doin' and I start addin' more pieces to it, maybe a little at a time. And then I got to go over and over it and find out do it fit this story right.

When it comes to putting it down on paper, Luther told me, "I never like to write nothing if I couldn't spell it....I tried everything to get out of it." He says:

> My teachers tell me I have to write but I already know how to write. . . . A good writer don't have to be gettin' words down. They can record words just as good as writing words down. A good writer is mostly about what you feel. What you think. What you see. And you write about these things. Its something like a part of art. If you wanna be good at it you just got to put your mind to doin' it.

When it came time to answer one of my letters, he waited for the teacher to help, but this time she refused. "She told me, 'Well, you gotta do it yourself.'" So he started it at home. Along with the letter, he included this to share with the readers of this book:

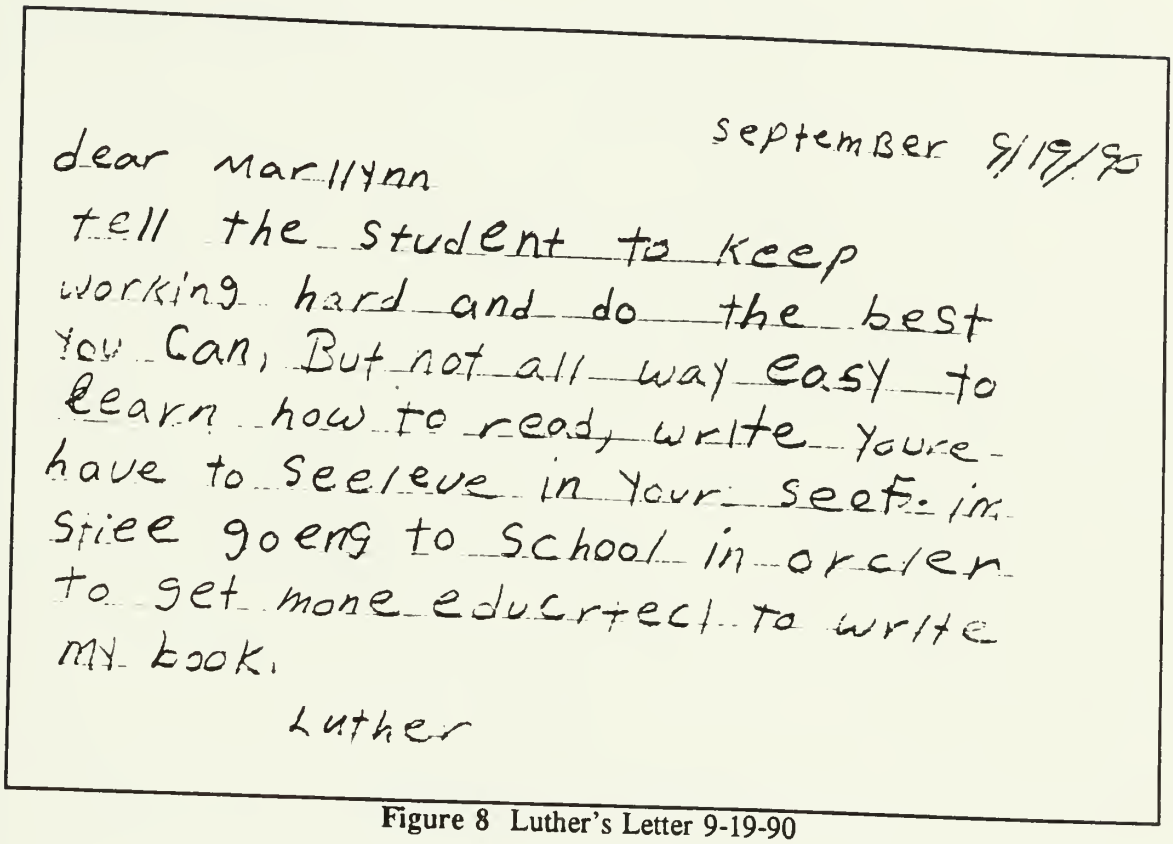


Figure 8 Luther's Letter 9-19-90

In our interviews Luther told me he has reflected a good deal on his past and is also trying to use what he learns to help newcomers to the school:

> Take that guy there [at Read/ Write/ Now] now. He couldn't read a lick. He talk to me about some of the things he can't tell the teacher. He said, "Luther, I can't learn nothing from them. They read too fast for me. I can't learn this way." I said, "What you mean?" I said, "Have you ever stopped to think, they don't know, have you ever stopped to tell the teacher, "Look, can you slow down, read real slow?" "You can't learn by their speed. You learn by your speed." Cause that's what happened when I was comin' up, they was goin' to fast and I didn't tell the teacher and I look back on a lot a that too. . . . Maybe if the teacher found out I was a slow learner but I didn't say nothin'. I think half was my fault and half was their fault....So I said, "that's what you have to tell the teacher. Go slow so you can catch on." I said, "Don't be afraid." And now, you know what he told me last week he said, "You know Luther, you know my wife and me went out to a restaurant and I got two cup a coffee I got one with creme and another black and there was marking on the top and when I got to my wife I said, "You want coffee with creme?" She said, "Yeah." And he handed it to her. He said

> he was shocked, his wife too. Yeah, I kept a lot of people from quittin'."

In spite of his reservations, Luther has now begun to use literacy more in his daily life. At home he's "catchin on the reading pretty good." He's begun to read the newspaper and more "story books". Now he leaves messages for his son, writes his own checks and can fill out simple forms. He's also begun to write letters to family members, whenever his daughter can correct his drafts for him. But he feels it's been slow going, and, like Jose, he feels hampered by the relative unavailability of classes:

> Sometimes I feel like I'm very lost. But I know I got to keep on trying. I try to be there [at school] as much as possible. I try to read and write when I'm not even there. When my shift had changed for me to go on days, I could not come to class. But I'm always picking up something, tryin' to read it. The words I don't know, I skip them. It seems like the ones I did know, by the time I got to the end of the story, I kind of figured it out. . . . I guess that's how bad I want to learn how to read. . . . Sometimes deep down inside it hurts, but I know sooner or later it will come to me, that I have to keep trying even more harder. . . . I'm not a quitter.

Date	Composition	Author Stated Audience/Readers
Fall 1987-Spring 1988	"Grandma and the Guardian Angel" and other stories (transcribed from tape)	general audience locally published in personal anthology The Little Boy and the Hobo Man/later shared with other class members and readers
	"My Story about New York City" (transcribed from tape)	self excerpt later published in newsletter
Summer 1988	letter to Mom (language experience)	teacher/mother
	"The Little Black Boy Who Came From Africa" (fictional story transcribed from tape)	general audience/teacher
Fall 1988-Fall 1989	many very short language experience stories with teacher	self/teacher
	letter to President Bush (language experience)	teachers/President Bush later in newsletter
	personal composing on tape recorder (not transcribed)	self
Summer Spring 1990	"My Story about How the World Changes" continuation of 1988 story about New York City (composed on tape recorder)	self/hopes to use as basis of further work for general audience
	"My Job"· (transcribed form tape)	self/members of writing workshop
	dialogue journal (written independently)	self/teacher
	letters (independent writing)	family/friends/daughter helps edit letters to author of this study

Figure 9 Luther's Composing History

You Gotta Tell Somebody: Ruth's Story

I was over an hour late the first time I rang the door bell to Ruth's apartment. The mountain roads had been unfamiliar. Every few miles a construction crew had been out, taking advantage of the few warm months. Middlebury, Vermont was in the height of an old fashioned summer. Here and there a woman could be seen picking the blue wild flowers that grew along the roadways. Children were selling lemonade. And in the Ben Franklin Five and Dime Store on Main Street plastic rafts and water guns were on display.

Ruth lives in a new apartment complex just outside town. When the door opened, a little girl about five bounded up. "Hi, I'm Angel," she said. " You're an angel?" I examined her costume for evidence. "No," she chided me, "that's my name." Then she danced away. Ruth's apartment was full of life. Dolls, tea sets and notebooks were strewn around the room. She looked different from her picture. She had lost weight, she said. And, she had got a slick, new haircut. Her quick, easy sense of humor was immediately apparent. At twenty-eight, she lives alone with her daughter.

Ruth was one of the authors in this study most able to write without assistance. She had gone to school in Vermont, up to 10th grade. She remembers:

> I just quit school to be out. I was wild in school, believe it
> or not. School was a drag. I learned more on the outside.
> And when it came to tests I just blanked out. So I quit.

Ruth had started with ABE tutors ten years ago, and tried a correspondence course. But she told me she didn't take them seriously until four years ago, after her divorce. Angel was getting bigger and she knew she wanted to keep up with her. She asked for Mary, a tutor she had known for years. "I was scared at first with her. . . . Now she's not a teacher, she's just a friend who comes to help me," she recalls. When Mary agreed to co-facilitate the Opening Doors writing group, Ruth was one of the first to join.

Unlike some of the others in the group, Ruth knew right away what she wanted to write about. For as long as she can remember she had a story to tell. She wanted to tell

others what it was like to be sexually abused by her father. "I always wanted to get it across, but I didn't know how," she said.

> When I first started I was by myself. Especially the touchy parts. A lot of times I wouldn't write about it in the group. I'd write Dear Harold or some other stupid writing. Not stupid, but funny. I didn't show it to anybody until it was done. Except Mary. . . she was there when I wrote the touchy part. . . . Once you start in on it you don't want no interruptions cause it just keeps rolling. It might not make sense but just keep writing it down. No matter that it doesn't sound right to the first sentence. Just keep writing until you're done and then go back through and fill in and stuff like that.

But, although she wrote at home, she remembers that she did get ideas and inspiration (and give it) in the group.

> Like the first lead. We discussed one by one what it would be like and kinda like go through therapy with them. They helped out a lot, the people at the group. We helped each other. You know not just myself. You know, like Lillian's book. It was touchy for her too.

It took Ruth three or four months to finish her story. During the editing process, a lot of things had to be taken out. She still has her first, hand written story. It is pages and pages long. In the final version of the book, Ruth began her story this way:

> It was quiet there listening to the birds. They seemed so happy. I would fall asleep, letting the wind rock me.
>
> It was not quiet or peaceful in the house. My father was a drunk and my mother shouted at him about his drinking. Then she would smash his bottles in the sink. He would get mad and take off and get another bottle. He would bring one home and drink one on the way...My father didn't work. My mother worked all the time.

<u>The Lord Will Keep You Going</u>, 1989

Later, she wrote:

> When Grandma Bea couldn't watch me, my mother would leave me with my father. I hated that he drank and played dirty games with me. He said that if I told anyone about the games he would kill me.
>
> By the time I was three, my father's drinking got worse and he was going mad. He took the shotgun after my brother-in-law.

> When my Mom was at work one day, my father came and took my brother Don and me. Mom didn't know where we were. The cops were looking for us. It seemed like months. I remember a place with a gas station on the corner and cars going by.
>
> I remember out back there were old junk cars all piled up. I remember my brother Don and I used to pick up pennies outside. No matter where you stepped, you would find a penny.
>
> The Lord Will Keep You Going, 1989

As the story continues, Ruth writes:

> I remember when my brother went to sleep at night, my father tied him up. As soon as he went to sleep, my father did things to me that didn't feel good. He would use jelly. I had to do as he said.
>
> Finally the day came when Don got out to call Mom. I don't remember how it happened. I just remember Mom was there with the cops.
>
> I remember that every time my father drove by my heart went into my throat and I couldn't move. It was like someone cut my legs off. This went on until I was seven years old. Then he went away and didn't come back.

Ruth ended her story this way:

> Now I finally have real peace. I know the past was not my fault. It's out there in the open. If anybody goes through this, tell somebody. No matter what, tell.
>
> The Lord Will Keep Me Going, 1989

When it was done, she said she felt free:

> Yeah. Free. I don't know. For some reason, its down on paper its done. . . . It's not eating at me. . . . It's strange. All the stuff I've been through. I sort of forgive him but it's still there, like, you didn't destroy my life after all.

But, for Ruth, part of it wasn't just "getting it out" but also trying to do her part to see that it doesn't happen to someone else.

> I wanted to talk to kids. . . . Hey, I lived this long. Something should have been done years ago, but I never said anything until then. I think that was the first time my mother really realized what was going on too. . . . So I wrote it so kids, from five and up can relate to it. Someone who doesn't know what I was talking about would probably throw it out cause they wouldn't know what its about. But if they've been

> through it they would know what goes on. . . . They always say, "they'll forget it" and this is showing you, no...It's gotta stop and they're just slapping their hands on it.

Ruth's book was one of the six chosen to be published. Joel Beckwith, a professional artist was chosen to illustrate the book. Ruth recalled that "the pictures that he did were so much like the real thing it was haunting." But there was one thing the publishing group and Ruth didn't agree on--the title of her book, The Lord Will Keep Me Going.

> They had a hard time. They didn't like my title, because I had nothing about the Lord in it. But I fought it tooth and nail because nobody else is gonna help you through this besides the Lord and if you keep going and you read it, you'll know it, what it all means. They were fighting me. Right from the beginning.

Before the writing group, Ruth always thought she couldn't write this book. Even after the book was published it its final form, it almost seemed to her as if it didn't really exist. Then, she got a letter about the book from a man in the state capitol who worked with battered children. He told her, "I know it takes a lot of courage to tell someone, not once but many times so I appreciate your writing this book and I know it will affect others as much as me." She attended the celebration for the books and it was reviewed in the newspapers.

But even then, for months, Ruth couldn't bring herself to go back to read her book - until she was asked to read it out loud at a conference at the state capitol!

> I was the only, what I would call rinkydink person there. . . . There were famous writers and senators. . . . It was hard. I flashbacked and all that. I was shaking so bad and had to walk out and calm my nerves down. You can't smoke in the capitol. It was all self-explanatory, why I wrote it and why it needs to be out.

After that, Ruth told me, she began to write more. She showed me jumbled pile of papers and a brand new wide-ringed notebook, filled with writing.

> You know when you feel like you have something on your mind. Things pile up, you know, write it down. If you think of something. Like one in there, I used to be manager of an apartment and these three Chinamen guys. You've probably seen on T.V., like they go around with their hands in their

> pockets and when they came to the place that's all they did. I thought this was hysterical. You know, like they was holding their guns in their pockets or something. They didn't know which way to go and they handed me all cash, you know. I charged them double security deposit and they still wanted it. I was like, "OK folks, what are you up to?" That was last summer. I wrote it down as soon as they left.

Ruth told me she writes in the good times as well as the bad. When things are rough she will do journal writing,. And, when she sees something good she writes what she calls sketches. She remembers one of them:

> I had to watch four kids. The youngest was one. And the three of them was sitting in the circle. The three different stages. And I sat there writing. One of them wanted to play cards, the other didn't know what to do with the cards.

She pulls out her vinyl notebook. One of her newest stories is there. It's about her grandmother's peanut butter muffins. The idea just came into her head, she said, one day when she was making cookies. Few of her ideas, she says, come from reading. Mostly they "just come to her."

> Yeah, you're standing there waiting for a taxi or something and you listen to people and its funny. I wish I had a tape recorder then--to put a story into different comments people make and stretch it out.

She points to another story, her first try at fiction:

> That's what I'm doing my next book on. Its about New York City. Its about a woman. She's in an institution. She's sitting looking out the window. Her mother wanted her to go with this jerk. That's what he's called - just a jerk. I describe it here. He takes her to New York City. I gotta find out more about New York City, cause you know, she gets left on the streets and she's gotta fend for herself and it really cracked her up. That's where and when her life changes. Its a story that's not true.

"Do you want to keep writing?" I ask her. "Yeah, its in my blood," she answered. "I've always tried to scribble down something, you know, I don't know what it was, but I've always tried to write something. But I've never had the courage before to keep going." She feels like her writing has improved. And now she is starting to use the dictionary. "Used to be how could I use the dictionary, I didn't know the words?"

"Do you feel differently about yourself since becoming a writer?" I asked her.

> Yeah. That's why they're sending me out to Montpelier. And I was on the news too. . . . Before I always held myself in, now I feel free. I do what I want. I get nervous. To show them we might be nervous but we got more power. I guess that's what you would call it. Yeah. I showed them that we may be little but we got more power. I guess that's what you would call it. There were these senators. They made millions of dollars and these folksingers and we, you know, how little can you get besides ABE? But anybody can do anything. Really. I've always felt that way. . . . Sometimes they say, "I could never be like this big person that did this." But then you say, "Well, he's just like you."

On my last visit Ruth told me she had enrolled in GED classes. "I probably won't have as much time for those stories." "What are your dreams for the future?" I asked her.

> I don't know. I live day by day. . . . I need to get an education for Angel and that's my main goal and so far for five years I've done it alone....I tried for three years to get her, to get pregnant. Then my marriage broke up. I didn't want to put her in day care. So I've stuck out my guns. She goes to school next year and then I'll get my [driver's] license. . . . Then maybe doing landscaping, something she can do with me.

Angel runs into the living room, covered with peanut butter, her feet dripping from the last trip to the wading pool. "You want me to make my name?" she asks me? Ruth hands her a pencil, and bends over next to her. "That's an A. Yeah, you got that part....Good. That's pretty good. And then the G. Half a C and he goes back in and he lost his way and went back out." "Like that. In and then he goes out that way," Angel repeats. "Now how do you make an L? " "He's got his foot out. Good, go on down and put his foot out. There you go. You can do it, Angel." Ruth smiles.

Date	Composition	Author Stated Audience/Readers
Fall 1988	Group writing "Wierd Harold" and other stories	writing group/tutor
	The Lord Will Keep You Going autobiographical story of childhood experience	writtten as part of Opening Doors publishing project/shared with tutor and writing group/ intended audience abused children/ later shared with many audiences including family, newspaper, radio talk shows, read at state capital
Spring 1989	"China Men" descriptive sketch	self/tutor
	children playing descriptive sketch	self/tutor
	personal journal (ongoing)	self
Fall 1989-Spring 1990	story about Grandmother's cooking	self/tutor
	fictional story about a girl's journey to New York City	self/tutor

Figure 10 Ruth's Composing History

Nobody Can Say Its Not a Good Book: Lillian's Story

Lillian Cram came to meet me at the Adult Basic Education office, located on the edge of the town green of Middlebury. Married, and the mother of four, like Ruth Boise, she had started Adult Basic Education classes in the past, and then stopped. "I just didn't have the time. With the kids and all. . . . They said to go back for the diploma but I thought I was just too old for it." Then she met tutor Ruth Barenbaum and they hit it off right away. That was about two years ago. She was forty-three.

Lillian got up to the eighth grade in her Vermont public school, she told me, but then:

> Well, I was 16 and I thought people were gonna laugh at me if I kept on going to school....I was the oldest in the classroom.... And, of course, I didn't like school anyways. So I just quit and helped my mama at home.

Lillian had learned to write in school and used it at home. "I used to have a diary. That was before I met my husband. And I'd write down when the animals were born and all that so I'd know how old they are." And, she wrote grocery lists, applications, sometimes letters to family, time sheets. Then, later, when she'd worked with an ABE tutor she'd written a couple of articles--about her bird, Tweetie, about her son's hamster, Brownie and a story about Christmas. When Ruth Barenbaum asked her to join the writing group, she agreed.

On the first night of the writing group everybody wrote. They were free to choose whatever they wanted. Lillian wrote the first paragraph of what was later to be the story "Dreams Do Come True." It begins:

> I lived on the main street. Our rent was high. The apartment wasn't worth the money we paid. In the winter the heating bill was very high. We got the worst apartment in the building. . . . The registers in all the rooms had electric wires sticking out. There were holes in the walls and ceilings, in my son's room a big hole over his bed. There were big old pipes sticking out of the ceiling. There were no outlet covers and that is a fire hazard. On my electric stove there were taped wires and the whole apartment needed a paint job. We

got only two windows in the whole place and no view from the window, just buildings.

Country Women, 1990

Lillian and Ruth remember that some people in the group at first were taken aback. "I knew it might hurt or upset somebody, because some people knew of the landlord. But I just said the way I felt, you know? I wanted to be honest, let it out." Lillian's story set the pace for personal writing in the group and led to a discussion that night about what they would and wouldn't write, if a story would violate the privacy of someone the group knew, for example.

Lillian continued her story to tell about her dream of moving to the country. She wrote about how she finally was given a chance to move into her sister-in-law's trailer, up on the side of the mountain. Her family was excited, but it wasn't easy. She remembers:

> We moved at the worst time of the year, in the winter time, the coldest day. It was below zero. The first night we ran out of kerosene, so we had to do something to keep us warm. My husband got a hot plate. We ran around the trailer like our heads were chopped off looking for a place to plug it in. We used my hair dryer and the popcorn popper and candles to make it warm for us. . . . Nothing is perfect. No one can say your dreams don't come true because mine did.

Country Women, 1990

Ruth Barenbaum remembers that by that time Lillian had taken to the writing process. In an article about the group's experiences she wrote:

> "I must have looked weird last night in the writing group," Lillian said to me, "because my eyes were staring off into space and I wasn't paying attention to anyone. But that's how I get when I writing because I'm feeling something hard, and thinking, and trying to find words for it all at the same time. Even though my eyes are off in space, I'm looking inside myself.". . . "Everyone at the table was looking off into space," I told her, "while they were writing." (1988:1)

When "Dreams Do Come True" was finished, Lillian couldn't think what to write next. Then one day Ruth Barenbaum came over to her house. As they sat on the back porch, Ruth asked her to think about things that happened when she was a child.

> And I told her about when I was small, you know, in the first grade, that the teacher hit me and that my mother was there

> for me, you know. . . . And I thought about it and talked to her about it and she said, "You ought to write about it.". . . And I never ever told anyone about it until Ruth came around and asked me about it.

That night, Lillian decided to begin her story:

> When I sat down at the table in the kitchen, everybody was in bed. Everything was quiet and I had cleaned up and everything. And I sat down and I said, "Well, I'm gonna get it done." And I sat there and I was thinking that I was in first grade and how it started. Just because I was left-handed. So I sat down and I wrote it out. It took me a couple times, maybe three times, to get it all out and I was up till about two o'clock in the morning. And then after I got down everything I sat down and I cried. I could feel the teacher hitting me.

Lillian's book begins this way:

> Just because I was left-handed, she didn't have to take it out on me. I don't think its right for people to be ashamed of being left-handed. I was ashamed when I was in school because my teacher made me feel that way.
>
> When I went to the first grade I thought it would be great to learn about things we need to know, like how to write and counting. I got off the bus and our teachers were at the door to tell us our class. After the bell rang, we went in. We called out our names to the teacher and then started to work. I had a good day. School didn't seem so bad.
>
> A couple of weeks went by and the teacher had us all do writing that she put on the blackboard. She looked around toward me and saw me writing with my left hand. She came to my desk and grabbed my pencil out of my hand, then put it in my right hand. She looked so big and I was only seven.
>
> I knew I couldn't write with my right hand. I didn't think that was wrong. My mom had never told me that it was. So when the teacher turned to go back to her desk, I snuck the pencil back in my left hand.
>
> In a few minutes, she noticed. She got up from her desk and started toward me. So I put the pencil back in my right hand. But it was too late. She grabbed my arm, pulled me from my desk and put me in the bathroom. She shut the lights off and said, "You have to stay here until you can tell me what you did wrong." I was left there for a good hour, being scared of the dark. There was no window.
>
> The teacher got worse as the weeks went by. I didn't dare look up at her. It seemed like whenever I did, she would grab hold of me and take me out of the class, or have me go in the furnace room for half the day.
>
> Left Handed, 1989

The problems continued for many weeks.

> I went back to my desk and she asked me what color was the card she was holding up. I told her it was purple, but I was wrong. It was black. She said I should have known it. How could I have known it when she took me out of the classroom and put me in the furnace room when she was teaching the colors?. . . When I got my report card it said I wasn't going to pass because of too many missed days. I thought everyone hated me and I wanted to die.

Left Handed, 1989

At first Lillian was afraid to tell her parents. When she finally did, they went right to the school. The punishments stopped and by the end of the year, Lillian got to pass.

Lillian had taken the first draft of her story to her writing group for help. As Barry Lane and Ruth led workshops about how to look at a story from different angles, about using details to make stories come alive and about lead lines and endings, she had began to revise.

> I found out more things that I know I went through and I jotted that down. And then when I got them all jotted down on pieces of paper I went back and pieced them together like Ruth told me to do. And of course she helped me out with some of them, you know, words that I didn't understand how to write 'em. . . . You know when I was in school the teacher used to call me stupid and that was drilled into my head. . . . My problem is I don't want to make a lot of mistakes. Cause I'll get hollered at. . . . Ruth knows I can do things. So if she thinks I can do it, I know I can! She gave me a lot of courage.

When the Opening Doors manuscripts were field tested with ABE students around the state, both of Lillian's books were at the top of the student vote. Left Handed was chosen as the one they might publish. "Are you sure you want to, you know, have this book out?" Lillian remembers Ruth Boise asking her. They talked it over with the group and decided, yes, both their books would be published.

Lillian had many reasons for writing the book. Like Ruth, she said writing it helped her to "just get it off my mind completely. It made me feel I wasn't that bad as a child." And, she wrote it, in part, to thank her parents. "Well like with my mother and father being there. I wanted to thank them for bringing me up. . . . I wish she [my mom] was still alive

to read the book. My father read it. He was real proud of it." She also wrote the book so kids would know not to keep things from their parents. And, later, she reflected that:

> Writing for other people makes me feel like I'm bettering myself. You know I use to feel like I was a nobody and that what's I told a lot of people and they said, "Yes, you are somebody. You're the author of that book," And I said, "Yes, I am."

Many people read Lillian's book. Her children, her husband, her mother-in-law, and her sister-in-law:

> I remember calling up my sister-in-law, Beatrice. And I told her I got a book out and that I'll be sending it and she said, "No, I'll come pick it up." And then she had told a lot of her friends that she's got a sister-in-law that's the author of a book. . . . I gave it to her and about a week and a half later she called up. . . and her boyfriend, he's a college student and he said I really wrote it good. It made him cry. "Nobody can say that's not a good book," he told her. . . . And there was one little girl in the Grand Union a couple of weeks ago. . . . "I like that book," she said, "I keep reading it over and over." She was in the 6th grade.

And, Lillian hasn't stopped writing. I'm working on my third book," she said proudly and told me about her story about how, when she was thirteen, she got a ride home with a boy who tried to "get after her."

> And I just wanted to, you know, help out other kids that age not to believe anybody. . . . Because my daughter's been through that too. But she did what I did, just got out of the car and left. . . . I had told her about that one time and she said she had thought about it when she took off.

"What have you gotten out of writing?" I asked Lillian at the end of our interview.

> Well, I've met a lot more people. I wanna get my basic education and I didn't have the courage to do it before. And I'm havin' courage enough now. And, of course bein' the author of a book makes me keep pushin' myself to, you know, do something for myself before I get too old. . . . I hope I'll have my GED and maybe work, even with this," she points to her arm which she hurt as an adult.

"Has it made any difference with your kids?" Lillian looked at me and brightened.

> Yeah. Writing helps me to understand myself. That helps me understand the kids. I can remember when I was a kid, what Mom did for us. . . . I didn't spend much time with my kids. Then I thought, "Hey, I was in first grade, seven years old. This is the time for me to be a mother and, you know, think of the kids the way I wanted to be. . . . So I spend

more time with the kids so they can read. . . . And now I sit down and I write a letter to myself. I do that lately. Not to forget, you know.

Date	Composition	Author Stated Audience/Readers
1986-1987	story about pet bird	self/tutor published in Green Mountain Eagle
	story about pet hamster	self/tutor published in Green Mountain Eagle
	Christmas stodry	self/tutor published in Green Mountain Eagle
	"Dreams Do Come True"- personal story	written as part of Opening Doors publishing project/shared with group/tutor/ in 1989 published in Country Women anthology
Fall 1988	Left Handed personal story of childhood experience	originally written for self and friend/shared with tutor and writing group as part of Opening Doors project/published with school aged child audience in mind/later shared with family/friends/wider audience
Spring 1990	personal writing	self
	letter writing	family/friends
	story about hitch hiking (unfinished)	self/daughter/other young girls hopes to publish

Figure 11 Lillian's Composing History

Too Much Cover Up: Mattie's Story

The Jamaica Plain housing project where Mattie Wheeler lives consists of several rows of four-story brick buildings. In front, where in another world a fountain or a circle of flowers might be, are two, eight foot mountains of broken up concrete. Around everything is a chain-linked fence. As Kona and I drove up we heard music and laughter. A couple of families were gathered on the one, small patch of green yard, having a picnic. Kona and I walked along the concrete side. We passed three men, each with a bottle peeking out of its brown paper sack. "Hey, where you going?" they called. We walked on.

Mattie's house is as cheerful as she can make it. We sit at her dining room table. Around her are trophies, likely won by one or another of her seven children. On the sideboard is a baby picture held up with little gold shoes; in front of it a card that, in child-like glitter letters, carries the words, "I love you Mom."

Mattie told me she grew up in Helena, Arkansas. She was born on a farm where she lived with her mother, father, and nine brothers and sisters. When she was three years old she went to live with her grandmother and great grandfather. Mattie described the lessons she learned from him in one of her first stories, "The Life of a Poor Country Girl on a Farm":

> My great-grandfather married an Indian woman. His people did not like it because he married out of his race. He was a white man. His sister and his brother married white. He did not.
>
> He had two girls and two boys by his wife. One of his sons and wife was killed by white people. They shot my uncle and hanged my great-grandmother. That day was hell.
>
> I have dreams about that day.
>
> Me and my great-grandfather would go looking for four leaf clovers. He said if I wished hard then, my wish would come true. I did. It didn't come true.
>
> I was so happy with my great grandfather. He said, if I had children, "Always listen to them. They will tell the truth sometimes. But the rest of the time, you would have to read between the lines." He would laugh.

> Sometimes I would be out playing. Some white people would ask me, "Who that white man you with?" I said, "He my grand pop." They say, "Stop lying, he is not your grand pop. You is black. He is a white man."
>
> I start crying. I go running to my great-grandfather and I tell him what they said to me. He picked me up and gave me a kiss and said, "Color is just skin deep. If all people knew that, they wouldn't be so mean. All you have to do is be yourself and you'll make it in this world." He said, "Sometimes you have to look over some people. They don't know what they are saying or doing. If they did, they wouldn't do the things they do."
>
> Need I Say More, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring, 1988)

After Mattie's great grandfather's died, she went back with her parents. They worked in the fields for fifty cents a day. But then:

> I told my brother, "I have to leave here. Mr. Tanner has been coming to the house." Mr. Tanner is the boss man. We work for him. He rapes the girls when they come of age. I told my brother not to tell daddy. "Daddy will try to stop him. He will put daddy in a tree like they did Mamma Rose or shoot him like they did uncle Robbie."
>
> Need I Say More, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring, 1988)

Mattie went to live with some other relatives. When she was fifteen she quit school to have her first child. Then followed Mattie's "happy years" when her husband was alive and they began to raise their seven children. But then he, too, died. For many years Mattie raised her children alone. She reflected to me about her reasons for going back to school:

> I was married for years, had my husband to protect me. I didn't need education. . . . but he's dead now so I have to take care of myself. . . . And I'm too old to do some kind of hard work. So I decided I got to get this education. . . . All my childrens is grown 'cept Terry. I told myself its my turn now to do something for myself.

So about four years ago Mattie began going to the Jamaica Plain Community School. One of her first teachers, Greg Leeds, had worked at Literacy Volunteers of New York City before coming to the Boston area. He believed strongly in participatory education, and had studied about how to teach writing. With Greg, one teacher remembers, everyone felt like

they could be themselves, literally themselves. Before that, Mattie had almost never picked up a pencil and had difficulty reading more than the most basic words. But soon, with the help of Greg and within the classroom community that began to evolve, Mattie began to get down on paper pieces of her life. She gathered her story together into "The Life of a Poor Country Girl on the Farm." It was published in a small booklet with other stories written by women in her class and titled You're Not Alone.

Over time, Greg's class began to exchange writing with another class of Hispanic, ESL students, taught by Loren McGrail. And, the idea for a city-wide magazine began to grow. Loren and Greg helped to organize the first Editorial Committee for the Publishing for Literacy Project and asked Mattie and her friend Pearl Thompson to join.

Mattie's contact with her teachers and members of the Editorial Committee led her to think more critically about her life and especially about her children. "Even with my children, my life is not a bowl of cherries," she said. She was particularly worried about one son, who had become involved with drugs.

> Life is a struggle and I think its about time for us to stop tellin' our children things is so great. Things is not so great; you discover all through your life. . . . You may be a school teacher, a doctor or whatsever, but that's not gonna happen in these kids' life. You're not gonna wake up one morning and all this stuff will appear. . . . I worked all my life and I don't have a Cadillac. And that's what I wanted to write for--to give other people an idea of what's going on. And I'm more fascinated about drugs than about anything. . . . It's hard but you can think and no matter how hard things get you don't have to use drugs.

During that time, drug use among young people in Jamaica Plain and Roxbury had exploded dramatically, reaching into every neighborhood. "The first piece I wrote [for Need I Say More] was "My Name is LSD" 'cause my son was on drugs during the time." Mattie told me. Her poem is three pages long, and speaks from the point of view of Mr. Cocaine and Miss Heroin. Part of the poem, as it appeared in the magazine is found in Figure 12.

MY NAME IS L.S.D.

By Mattie Wheeler

I am looking for a friend to rule.
I will make you feel like a fool.
I will take everything you can get.
Do you understand?
I am your boss.
I will make you kill your mother.
What do you have for me?
Give me your money, your car, and your home.
I got you now.
I am dangerous.
I am the baddest.
You can call me hash or L.S.D.
I will make you kill for me.
You is dead.
You don't have anything my love.
You is a fool.
L.S.D. has made a mess out of so many children.
I wish someone would do something about it.
It has killed my best friend and one of my sons-in-law.
If I could, I would do away with all drugs.
Hey, I am back with the name Mr. Cocaine.
I am looking for you boys and girls, old and young.
You think you know it all.
You been everywhere, but you can't see what I am doing to you.
I am going to bring you down to your knees.
You are in my power now.

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Figure 12 Mattie's First Publication

Mattie ends her poem with a plea for help:

> Maybe someone can do something about it.
> Open a place for our sons and daughters-
> we need to do something about how to fight.
> Drugs are taking over our children.
> We do have to stop drugs.
> The police are not helping much.
> They will let your children get in bad trouble before they do anything.

Need I Say More, Vol. 1 No. 1
(Spring, 1988)

After seeing her first piece in print, Mattie began to write more at home. "If I see something go through my mind, I write it down when I get home," she said, going into her kitchen and bringing out an armful of envelopes and scraps of paper. But often, Mattie says, its been hard to find a quiet time to write. The writing weekends, she reflected, offered that - and more. At the first one, she remembers:

> I enjoy being on the island. I felt like I was at home in the country, the smell of the green grass. It was a dream to remember--reading my poem, the party. It was a place of peace...

As a member of the Editorial Committee, Mattie was considered to be one of the leaders at the weekend. She read her writing to the group, helped others to get started with their writing, cemented friendships and took time to write herself, too. She published four of the poems she wrote there. In "Give Me My Child," she went back to a familiar theme:

> Can't you see the jail is full
> Let me give a helping hand take away
> the gun and drugs. Give them
> a job and peace of mind.
>
> Don't run, my child.
> Rest your head on my
> shoulder.
>
> I will watch you through
> the dangerous night.

Need I Say More, Vol. 2 No. 2
(Spring, 1989)

After the second weekend, Mattie wrote three more poems. Then, the day after they came home, the son of one of the Editorial Committee members, was gunned down. In one of her later poems, "Mattie to Ada, she comforted her friend and fellow author. It begins:

> I know you are in pain.
> But we must go on.
> There are times
> We think the world has forgotten us.
> We must go on.
> Sometimes we can't do anything right.
> We must go on

Need I Say More, Vol.3, No.1
(Winter, 1990)

In March, 1990, as part of the "Writer in the Classroom" project, a class at the CARE Center, a program for teenaged Hispanic mothers in Holyoke requested Mattie. They had read her poems, the one called "Who Am I?" about "a mother with the world on her shoulder", comforting her child, and the ones about drugs. Mattie was nervous. "If I'd a found a hole, I'd a went through it," she remembers:

> When I walked in and seen these young kids, I could just see them laughing, making fun. . . . But after I was there for a while, they made me feel welcome and then we just started talking like we knew each other for years and years.

Before Mattie had arrived, the young women had tried to reconstruct her life from her writing. "I'll bet you had your kid when you were fifteen or sixteen just like us," they guessed. But they were wrong about one thing. They thought, for someone to write like she did, Mattie must have gone all the way up to college. Mattie remembers she was pleased about that. She read her poems and then each of the girls wrote something about Mattie in Spanish. Mattie wrote a letter about the experience, reprinted on the next page.

"Do you feel differently about yourself since you started writing and reading?" I asked Mattie. Her respond was immediate and direct. "Oh, I'm a new person, lots different."

> Some of the things goin' on in the world I didn't even know was happenin'. And as of now I'm able to give a little advice, to talk to people and have people's eyes open. . . . When I first started to school I wasn't doin' that much taking to peoples, just because I was afraid of saying the wrong word, afraid of sayin' something to correct the other person. We would be talkin' and I'd "um-hum" or "maybe", something like that. Then my teacher Greg, he said to me, "Mattie, all of us got to learn. I wasn't born a teacher. Now if you say something they don't understand, someone will correct you." So from there I started talkin'. Then he took me places and I had to read these pieces, that's what started it.

Mattie does more writing at home now--leaving notes, making lists. She doesn't write letters much, she uses the phone for that. But she can get things done with reading and writing now when she needs to. And, she hopes she can continue her education and eventually get a job where she can use her reading and writing. But for her, she says, the

main role of literacy in her life is as a means to help her achieve what she now sees as her mission- to expose the realities of life for children in her neighborhood.

> This stuff is embedded inside you. If you start talking about it you can get the other person to talk about it. . . . We have too much cover up. If you start to talk about it, you can do something about it.

What a day in holyoke
I went to holyoke. I met some very
nice people. there. they made me
feel so good about myself and
my writeing. I hope all the girls
will Continue on in school. dont
give up. we got to remeber when
you make a mistake we have to try to lean
From them. dont give up Keep going. you
can do anything you want to.
me and my daugther en Joy meeting
every one. hope that they will
let us come back again.
you all have given me hope.
I will Keep on writeing.
dont let no one put you down
Always Keep your head high
get a good education. we all
have time ← → so we have
to look to God For help. the will
never let you down. He's a friend

thanKs For haveing Me, Kim
and Kanka.
Mattie

Figure 13 Mattie's Letter to CARE Center

Date	Composition	Author Stated Audience/Readers
1987	"Life of a Country Girl" life story	self/teacher/classmates published in Need I Say More in 1988
Spring 1988	"My Name is LSD"	self/son/editorial committee members, published in Need I Say More
Summer 1988	"Who Am I?" poem about motherhood	self/other mothers/ editorial committee, published in Need I Say More, read at CARE Center as part of Teacher in Classroom project
Spring 1989	"Give Me My Child" "Give My Child Back to Me" "Thompson Island-A Beautiful Picture" "Pain"-all poetic narratives	participants at Thompson Island Writers' Weekend, published later in Need I Say More
	personal writing (through present)	self
Spring 1988	"Mattie to Ada" "Struggle with My Life" "A Friendly Tip"- poetic narratives	self/friends/participatns at Wooman Hill Writers' Weekend, publishied in Need I Say More
Summer 1988	story about son- unfinished	self/son

Figure 14 Mattie's Composing History

CHAPTER VI
LEARNING FROM THE AUTHORS: PURPOSES, AUDIENCES AND OUTCOMES OF WRITING

"You can't really know what it's like unless you've been there" over and over authors proclaimed to me. Of course, in a very real sense we know this is true. Their stories defy homogenization. Yet, taken together, they did suggest certain patterns that merit our further reflection and analysis. In this chapter I will first look more closely at the nature of writing by authors with respect to their purposes and audiences for writing. Then, following that, I will discuss what I perceive to have been key outcomes of authorship for those in this study: authors' changing beliefs about literacy, learning and knowledge, their practices and their plans.

Purposes for Writing

Perhaps the most outstanding finding of this study, and the most obvious, is that the overwhelming portion of writing by adult beginning readers fell within what Britton would characterize as the expressive function. This is not surprising in light of the studies of writing researchers mentioned in Chapter Two. But, within the context of adult literacy, it does stands out because it is so at odds with the popular conception that adult beginning readers are mostly interested purely in short-term, instrumental goals. As we have seen, although many adult beginning readers came to the literacy classroom with the idea that they would learn functional skills, once they were introduced to writing about their lives, many embraced wider purposes with enthusiasm and a high level of engagement.

This section describes six purposes for writing that stood out for me as I read and reread the writings and interview transcripts. The first three were primarily expressive and

closely intertwined: writing to make a commitment to learning, writing for therapeutic purposes and writing for identity. Authors were also moving into persuasive writing by using their lives as a means to teach others and by writing more directly to persuade others, purposes associated more closely with what Britton might call a transactional function. And some were just beginning to develop patterned verbal constructs associated with the poetic function. These purposes are intricately interwoven with their audiences, which will be reconsidered afterwards.

P.S. It's Never Too Late to Learn: Writing to Make a Commitment

For many authors writing seemed to be a vehicle for making a commitment to literacy and for affirming their goals both to themselves and publicly to their teachers and sometimes their families. Although often such writing does not seem to an outside reader to be particularly remarkable, to the writer such basic affirmations may be saturated with personal meaning. One author at Read/Write/Now dictated this piece as one of his first language experience stories:

> In my life people didn't read to me. I waited until I got tired and I decided to do something about it and I started to read and write. I'm going to do good for myself. I will learn to read and write this summer.

For this particular author the words *I waited until I got tired* represents a constellation of meanings. He "got tired" of being in a difficult marriage and now that it has ended faces an increased need for literacy. He "got tired" of feeling like he was being laughed at behind his back. He "got tired" of being unable to help his children with their school work. "Deciding to do something" and "doing good for myself," I believe, represents a similar set of expressions meant to covey a series of personal meanings.

As some authors speculated to me, this may have been an especially important purpose for those who have been most impeded and stigmatized by their difficulties with reading and writing. And, in fact, this kind of writing was often clearly evident in first

writings and in early language experience stories dictated to teachers. This dictated story represents another author's attempt to visualize, verbalize and acknowledge his goals and well as his success so far.

> I came because I wanted to learn how to read and write. Some of my goals are to read to my grandchildren and to write short letters to my wife and friends and also to make out checks. My reading is a little better and my writing is improving also.

Other times, this purpose for writing would appear within longer pieces with multiple purposes. Luther's story about running away with the hobo is perhaps the best example. In many ways his story is a metaphorical journey used to present, through the words of the hobo, Luther's notion that, "whatever you set your mind to you could do it." Although Luther had fallen behind in school, the hobo exhorted him to continue trying. Toward the end of the book Luther shifts to the present day, promising himself with respect to writing his book that, "This is just the first step. Now I got to take the second step."

Such a purpose makes sense when seen within the contexts of authors' past experiences. As we saw, many authors came to classes with a deeply embedded sense of failure with respect to learning. Their experiences were often a result of schooling rather than representative of a lack of it. Many were haunted with the memory of being laughed at in school. They didn't have the right clothes, they stuttered, they didn't know the words when they were called on by the teacher, they got too big for their classes, they were stupid or slow. "I didn't know anything. I just knew I didn't know" the reader may recall Jose saying. And later, "It looked like nothing would come in." One new reader from New York wrote poignantly about the moment when this belief took root for her, saying: "I remember the day my teacher yelled at me for not knowing a word. Maybe in my mind it was bigger than it was, but from that day on I ran away from reading and writing" (Rivera, 1990).

Not all experiences in school were not as extreme as Lillian's, who was hit and shut in a closet for writing with her left hand, but each somehow had learned to feel it was their

fault. Over time, they internalized the notion that everyone can succeed in school and if you don't it's because of your own lack of ability or unworthiness (Fingeret, 1989). As a child, how could Lillian have known then that there was another reason why she didn't know her colors when she came out of the closet?

As we have seen, once they got behind it was difficult to catch up. "Most of the time they just helped the ones who could read...They just pass you by and pass you by and pass you by," one author was able to reflect later. Afraid of the social consequences of admitting their problem and being singled out, many authors learned behaviors to make themselves invisible or just "blanked out." Others resisted by "acting up," fighting or being "a big joker", behaviors reminiscent of the experiences of working class boys Paul Willis describes in Learning to Labor (1977). Some like Jose, began skipping out, searching for support and human interaction elsewhere.

To a varying extent, home environments with limited economic resources and sometimes disrupted social supports constrained authors chances to get help outside of school. Interestingly, almost two-thirds of those in this study either lost or had an absent parent during childhood. Many single parents, like Luther's mother, had to work two jobs and were rarely able to be home. Gender, race and class contributed to the unequal distribution of opportunity. Mattie was forced to leave her family at a young age because of threats of harassment from the white boss on the farm. Lidia's early years in Italy were spent escaping war, poverty and the death of her mother. Ruth struggled with sexual abuse. Whatever the precipitating circumstances that led them to leave school - having to work, becoming pregnant, or just feeling like they "learned more on the outside," every author remembers leaving with doubts about their intellectual competence.

With this context in mind, we can see more clearly the reasons why many authors chose as a primary purpose for writing the task of making a commitment to learning and sometimes, within that purpose, of examining factors outside themselves which constrained

learning. Writing of this kind, however tentative, provides the authors with a means of affirming their abilities, a "first step" toward moving on to actualize their goals.

A Puzzle in My Life: Writing for Identity

When Lidia was provided the opportunity to write, from the beginning she had an idea of her purpose and her audience. She wanted to tell her children what it was like growing up in Italy during the war. Writing, for her as for others, was a way to remember people and events that had meant something in her life, and to recognize how she had coped and survived creatively with life situations. "I remembered Italy. . . I found out if you put it down on paper all those little pieces come flashing back. This one bring back this. And that one bring back that," she said.

Whether they wrote complete life histories or narratives of particular episodes, it was their pasts to which authors turned most frequently in their writing. What was their purpose in writing about their lives? I asked the authors. Jose, in one of his cynical moments, told me it was because "it's the only thing we know." But I think the reasons run deeper. A central set of purposes for this kind of writing, I believe, have to do with what Harold Rosen calls, "that never finished business, the construction of a socially constituted self" (1988: 74). People, Rosen suggests, can learn from their own life history just as one might learn from a history book. You can be, he says citing Ronald Fraser, "the author of your childhood, then the historian of your past" (1988:76). Through writing you can examine your life as object and subject and synthesize the two relationships. "In becoming aware of myself I attempt to look at myself through the eyes of another person...Here we have the objective roots of even the most personal and intimate reactions." Rosen says this time quoting Bahktin (1988: 77). Writing about one's history, then, serves a double voice "both how it was and how it is fused together" (Rosen, 1988: 77).

Many authors used writing as a way to reconstruct positive influences in their lives. Lidia, Luther and Mattie all evoked the powerful influence of their grandparents who believed in them and instilled in them values that helped shape their identities. Jose recalled other significant people and happy, successful times from his childhood--the way he helped Mrs. Decker at the meat market, the man who taught him to raise pigeons. Others wrote about building a house, taking care of animals, playing football, raising children, or getting married. Writing also provided a chance to identify the difficult times: for Jose to slowly, painfully recreate the blur of those years of drug and alcohol abuse, for Mattie to tell about a family lynching, for Lidia to tell about how her father didn't recognize her when he came home from the war.

Sometimes the unexpected also emerged from this kind of writing, reinforcing Rosen's contention that in writing, "We not only unmask ourselves-we await to know the face under the mask" (Rosen,1988: 77). As Lidia stayed awake nights remembering things she had "never even told to my children" she "unmasked" the pain at the early loss of her mother. "Another puzzle in my life was that when I was five years old my mother died," she said. "So it was the void of my mother. So it was an opportunity not just to relate it to my kids but also to get in touch with my mother again."

"Events are always to hand," says John Berger (1984). "But the coherence of these events is an imaginative construction." As they began to elaborate their stories, many authors found ways to identify pivotal events in their lives. "And that was it," I heard over and over again as authors, for example, identified a turning point, often the point beyond which their illiteracy seemed assured. "That did it," said Jose about being sent to the institution and Mattie about leaving the farm. As we will examine more later in looking at outcomes of writing, the composition of life stories often served to help authors to recognize that, as Lidia put it, "I matter."

> I learned that no matter what happened as a child, you live through it. If you go through those trials and tribulations that is an education in itself that you would never understand if you didn't go through it.

Writing for the purpose of examining one's identity was a process able to be drawn upon by many authors, regardless of their level of personal development. Even if the writing itself was not as developed as that produced by more proficient writers, it allowed authors to express mature conceptions. That this kind of writing has such potential was pointed out by Kinneavy, who devoted an entire chapter of his book Theory of Discourse (1971) to a discussion of the Declaration of Independence as a form of expressive discourse that enabled a new social personality, in this case a nation, to determine itself.

Unburdening: Writing for Therapeutic Purposes

For all the authors, it seemed, writing had a therapeutic purpose. But sometimes, particularly in pieces written originally for oneself, unburdening, dumping something out, and achieving a sense of relief seemed to predominate. For Ruth, writing about being abused was a way to unburden herself of painful memories she had held inside, to feel like it was out of her system and to move on. Ruth, the reader may remember, shared that experience with Lillian who later sat her kitchen until two o'clock in the morning, writing and crying until her story about being left-handed was told. Other authors in their group followed suit, telling stories of being raped, of losing a father, or accidentally shooting another man while hunting.

For some, like Lillian, the story came flooding back to her and she was able to pour most of it out in one night. For others, like Jose, getting the past out was slow. It came in starts and spurts, and was intensely personal. He reserved this kind of writing to do at home where he could reflect on things he hadn't told anyone, even those he trusted the most. Some writings of this nature remained personal. A few authors reported sporadically keeping diaries at home or just jotting things down on scrap paper or envelopes when ideas "came to them." Sometimes they weren't even saved, as in the case of one woman who told me she

wrote angry letters to her husband to "relieve the pressure" and then threw them in the garbage.

For many authors, being able to tell stories of oppression in an environment where they could trust that they would not be made to feel vulnerable, suppressed or censored was "like a big weight being lifted off" and led to personal breakthroughs. One teacher told me of a revision conference she had with a man in his forties:

> He was segregated. He didn't say any of that. But he did say he went to the hospital and he hurt his hand. His fingers got messed up. He said the doctor looked at it and just told him to go home. So he went home and his fingers were like this. [She gestures.] He couldn't move them. His mother set it and made a cast.

As she probed more deeply the author told her that he was sent away from the hospital because the white doctor wouldn't treat him. As they talked, this author declared, "I'm gonna put it in there." "You better put it in there," she responded. "I mean this stuff is stuff nobody ever knows." She reflected on this story to me saying, "Now he's going on to another level where he's ready to move into writing things that are really true."

You Gotta Tell Somebody: Using My Life to Teach Others

For many authors, it seemed to me, expressing sadness and anger on paper, even if just for themselves, served a role in helping them to transform feelings of passivity and powerlessness to ones of resistance and potential power. One expression of this sense of power was the decision to share this writing with others.

For many authors, like those at Opening Doors who knew their work might be published, writing served several simultaneous purposes. Lillian, for example, initially began Left-Handed "to get it off my mind." But as she wrote, she began also to see it as a way to "thank my parents for what they did." As she further developed her story for possible publication, the writing took on an additional purpose as a means through which she might help others going through similar experiences. Ruth's story of being abused followed a

similar path. While the writing was therapeutic for her, she also emphasized that she "didn't write it for selfish reasons." She began to think about how to "word" the story "so kids could relate to it." As you will recall, she ended the story with poignant advice: "If anyone goes through this you gotta tell. No matter what, tell."

Looking at the writing alone, it is often difficult to distinguish between pieces primarily written for the self and pieces written expressly to reach others. Many decided to share very personal stories only after the work was completed. Jose, for example, initially would not have dreamed of sharing his story with others. It was only after his own personal copy of his book was published that, both with enthusiasm and some reluctance, he agreed to share it with at-risk high schoolers. Some authors, like Lillian, began write expressly to teach others after experiencing what it was like to publish a book others were interested in reading. In some of these cases the audience was intimate, as when Luther wrote to give advice to his son or Mattie wrote her poem to console a friend on the death of her son.

Other times the audience was more generalized. Lillian, for example, plans for her next life story to address all teenage girls who might be offered rides by hitch hikers. Mattie now writes about drugs as one way to begin to speak out about injustice in her community. Other students write to other adults who are learning to read and write, or to teachers, asking them to imagine what it is like not to be able to read and write. Whatever its audience, such writing may be one way, as Rosen points out, to assert one's power and authority. Authors, as we saw, are not unaware of the risks of such writing. "You have to watch what you talk about," said Lillian in reference to her piece about an abusive landlord.

Too Much Cover Up: Moving into Persuasive Writing

As we have seen, messages authors had for others were most often told through personal experiences. As they might in oral discourse, authors let their stories speak for themselves. More generalilzed analyses were rare, even among the wider group of writings I

read by adult beginning readers outside this study. However, as we will examine in more detail later, at none of the sites were authors explicitly taught about varied writing genres. Most teachers felt that, for now, just getting things down on paper was enough and encouraged the use of one's life as text.

However, a few authors seemed to be moving toward what Britton called the transactional function, especially in its persuasive dimensions, using it especially to point out injustices they saw around them. As Mattie's sense of herself as an author has grown, for example, she had begun to consider issues related to drugs and parenting not only in her own life, but also in a more general sense. In her poem "Give My Child Back to Me" she evokes the universal feelings of all mothers. Luther, too, you may remember, had begun to relate his experience with homelessness in the Bronx to general issues of poverty and politics. Yet, although he was able to draw on oral discourse genres (evidence of language he has heard in sermons and speeches by African American leaders can clearly be discerned) his lack of knowledge of genres through which to express his ideas in writing is one possible reason why he has not been able to "get his thoughts straight." The piece remains unfinished.

Playing with Words: The Beginnings of Fiction and Poetry

There were a few more, but still limited, examples of what Britton calls the poetic function of language - of playing with words and using them to create images and patterns. Ruth was moving into this kind of writing in her short sketches of children. And, most recently she has begun her first longer fictional piece about a young woman in New York City. A colleague of Mattie's has also experimented with poetic images in a poem entitled "Colors" and tried his hand at a children's story about a Tiger.

For some authors the creative use of words and fiction seem to come more naturally than for others. Luther is perhaps unique in this respect. Even though he could barely get words down on paper without assistance, Luther has a keen sense of story and was able to

create and dictate a long fictional piece, "The Little Black Boy Who Came from Africa," and to play with repetition of words for effect. Others, in a more tentative way, were exhibiting the beginning of poetic writing within their pieces. Kona describes how he detected this in the work of a woman who wrote a story about the death of a kitten:

> I really liked that story. It could be the beginning of fiction for her. But it is a true story. I would suggest to her that if she wants to she go back to that story, if she want to, and expand more things with more detail. Because the way she describes things you see the beginnings of characterization. It's very short, maybe about three pages, but you can see it.

You can also "see it" in Jose's story about the woman feeding the squirrels--in the ways he changed the scene and the color of the woman's hair and in Mattie and Lidia's efforts to use creative imagines within poetry: Mattie's depiction of Miss Heroin and Mr. Cocaine and Lidia's images of the green Gassoso bottle her mother gave her.

Private and Public Audiences

As we have seen, both in Chapter Two and in the stories of these authors, audience is more difficult to characterize than is commonly assumed. Awareness of a potential audience can motivate writing, authors can change audiences during the course of writing, new audiences can emerge after the writing is complete. While the ability to write to a general or abstract audience is often lauded, people just as significantly communicate with and know their audience. For the purposes of this study audience is conceived of as broadly as possible.

Perhaps the most significant thing about the audiences of these authors is their variety. Unlike in Britton's study or many findings related to writing in public schools, these authors did not write only for their teachers. Authors wrote for many audiences, including: self as audience; teacher as trusted adult; teacher as co-researcher;classmates; family; friends and coworkers; unknown others with a similar problem; unknown other literacy students and other general audiences.

Teachers, however, were often a first audience for writing, particularly in the case of learners who relied on teachers to help them with language experience stories. Dialogue journals were another way in which learners explicitly wrote to teachers. What is most different, perhaps, from public school writers is that authors in this study rarely, if ever, wrote to teachers as examiners. Except for a first writing sample, at no time was the authors' work formally evaluated. This is not to say that some authors did not have an internalized notion of testing from previous experiences. Jose, for example, may have written at home for himself, but he also wrote for the teacher "to show her that I'm working real hard." Other students wrote to the teacher with the expectation that "I was looking for her to find my mistakes." But, as Lidia points out, these situations occurred in a context where the goal was helping the authors to master new skills rather than to test them against an external standard.

In most cases teachers played the role of a trusted collaborator, who would want to read anything an author had to say. Writing became, for some, a part of an ongoing educational interaction between the student and teacher. Many teachers in this study emphasized to authors that reading what they had to say was a learning experience for them, thus allowing them to play a role in accumulating a body of knowledge about the lives of literacy students and serve to some extent as informal co-researchers. As we also saw, in some cases authors saw their progress in writing as jeopardized when, due to teacher turnover, relationships of trust were interrupted.

One outcome of expressive writing, as we saw, was that many authors began to feel motivated to write for themselves at home and sometimes at school. Many teachers stressed private, therapeutic writing as a way to help students to direct their attention to meaning and to suppress inhibiting variables such as spelling or audience. Writing folders and even computer disks were considered private, to be entered only with the authors' permission and teachers did not expect to see every piece of writing. As authors began to write for

themselves, as we saw, they often continued because it met purposes they had for getting things out of their system and expressing their identities.

As authors did begin to produce "reader-based prose," most often they wrote for someone they knew, using it to facilitate interpersonal involvement and rapport. Rarely were known audiences contrived for the purposes of practice. Perhaps the categories of known audiences mentioned most frequently were classmates and family members. Given the contexts of their writing groups, it is not surprising that many authors wrote with their fellow students in mind. As we have seen, many authors often choose their topics as a response to dialogue and the sharing of writing within the group.

What is perhaps noteworthy is how often authors wrote for their families. Authors, as we saw, often wrote their life stories so their children, their husbands or wives or other relatives would know what their lives had been like. Others wrote to persuade their children not to make the same mistake they had or to communicate certain values they had acquired from their parents or grandparents. Families provided for authors both incentive and support; many as in the case of the author described below, who hurried home to share his accomplishment:

> He took it home. His wife was cooking dinner. And he made her stop and said. "Look at this. I wrote this." Then he went around the house and made everyone else stop what they were doing. "Here read this."

Teachers reinforced this practice by providing more formal occasions for authors to share their finished work with family. They were often invited to publication celebrations and readings and given copies of the books. As family members showed interest in the writing they sometimes encouraged the authors to share their writing further. One author sent his stories off to relatives in Mississippi at the urging of his family. Writing for family was often an enabling factor but there were times when it also created constraints. One author remembers that:

> Once I showed them the story they started comin' up with their own ideas on how they woulda wrote it. . . . Yeah, my brother like, "That's not really, that didn't really happen." My mother told me "I don't remember you doing that." I

> almost feel that the impression I got by some of the family members was that they didn't like what I wrote, but that's water over the damn.

Writing was less frequently mentioned as being written for coworkers or friends, but once it was completed it was often shared with them, as in the case of Lidia, who used her book to recruit friends to literacy. One or two authors mentioned taking their books to work. Another author shares her writing with a friend who is interested in her progress with literacy.

> She calls me every week to see how I'm doing. She's goin' to college now. She's going to do nursing. But she's always trying to find out if I'm coming here; what I've been writing here. I don't think she will quit for me now.

There were also instances of writing to unknown audiences. Many authors, like Ruth and Lillian, might be characterized as writing as "experts to unknown laymen" when they wrote to imagined audiences of others with problems similar to their own. One category within this which deserves special mention is writing by authors to others who are illiterate or learning to read. Several authors told me that they wanted to share with them an awareness that they are not alone in their problem, to give them confidence to try to learn and to assure them that they can succeed. We will explore in more depth later how taking on the role of teaching others in this way also served to give the authors themselves the confidence to keep going in their literacy studies.

Only a few authors in this study mentioned that they wrote "so anybody could know about my life." In these cases it was difficult to identify whether the author had a generalized audience in mind or in fact had no discernable audience. However, in a few cases authors may, as Britton suggests, be moving toward developing the capacity to write to a generalized audience, as in the case of Mattie, who has begun to write to a more general audience consisting of all those interested in the problems of her community.

Changing Beliefs, Practices and Plans

What is it that changed when these adult literacy students began to see themselves as writers, readers and authors? What new assumptions, values and beliefs led Mattie to say about herself without a moment's hesitation, "Oh, I'm a new person" or Lidia to come to the conclusion that "my voice matters?" What kinds of things do these authors do with literacy now that they didn't before? How might these changes be reflected in the social roles they play and their plans for the future?

This section explores what I perceived to be outcomes of authorship among the eighteen authors I studied. As such, it represents only a tentative, beginning exploration by one researcher and a few authors, limited by the design of this study, the difficulty many authors had in articulating their underlying assumptions and my own subjective interpretations. Many more systematic and comparative studies are needed if we are to come to understand such a complex issue as this. However, as I listened to the authors, there were six aspects of change that seemed to merit particular attention.

You Can Learn: I Never Believed It But It's True

In Chapters One and Two we saw that literacy has, over time, become a social object or symbol. Just as a diamond is a symbol for luxury or home a symbol for comfort, (Charon, 1986) literacy has taken on a social meaning associated with intellectual, social and moral competence. Individual's perspectives of themselves and their interactions with others are shaped, in part, through the symbolic perceptions and shared meaning of themselves as literate or illiterate.

We have also seen that, as researchers have begun to bring the faces of literacy learners closer into view, they have begun to see that literacy education is more than an instrumental activity for learning skills. Literacy education may well be characterized in part

as a symbolic activity wherein learners begin to overcome "internalized and socially enforced feelings of inadequacy" (Beder & Valentine, 1990). Assuming that learners come to literacy classes with already established theories of language, literacy, teaching and learning, researchers have begun to suggest that beliefs may function as a core or critical dimension in learners' movement toward enhanced literacy (Lytle, 1990).

If there were any one single message authors in this study wanted me to communicate to my readers it was not to underestimate the importance (and the difficult changes associated with) "believing you can do it." One author summarized it perhaps better than anyone when he said:

> All I would like to say is in your little book you should tell people there is no such thing as you cannot learn. Don't lose that hope. It's not so. You can learn. I never believed it but it's true.

Luther also had something to say about this. When I asked him why some people come to literacy programs and then drop out, he became thoughtful.

> Because they're still afraid. The teacher can't do it. They got to get it out themself. There's nobody can tell you. You got to believe in yourself...you got to break that chain. If you ain't go the faith to do it, you ain't gonna do it.

As we have seen, for many authors the route toward believing they could learn was a long and circuitous one. For Jose, for example, it required many turning points. Overcoming drug addiction, moving to Springfield, succeeding in jobs, acquiring a skill at welding school and being in a supportive relationship all led up to the point when, after he hurt his back, he was able to have the confidence to try school again. For many in this study an unexpected turn of events-an illness, a husband's disability, the prospect of supporting a mentally retarded son provided an incentive to try school again. For others it was the desire to help children who were entering school, or the realization that children were grown and it was now their turn.

But even once the decision was made there were other obstacles. Locating a literacy program that would meet their needs required persistence. Luther, for example, remembers spending three months in an ABE program where he "just sat there" in a big room with a workbook. What is perhaps surprising is not that he dropped out but that he continued looking for a program. That a program needs to offer support to new students can be seen in the kinds of advice these authors gave to other students and their teachers:

> Go to school. It's not easy. Find yourself a good class and get yourself comfortable. That's more important than learning to read and write. Usually people that can't read and write they like to hide away. It's very uncomfortable. It don't happen but you feel like people are laughing. Kids are laughing. It's not easy to go to school. Most people don't understand that.
>
> I think people that don't know how to read and write, every time they show up in school they need a pat on the back. Congratulations, you made it. 'Cause just doing that is hard.
>
> Don't laugh too much in class cause people think you are laughing at them
>
> Not to give up on a student. Because everyone has a way of understanding, no matter how severe the problem. Not to put in back row and hope they'll catch up.

These authors were the lucky ones. Eventually all of them did find what they considered to be "the right place" with teachers who were "there with us." Being "with" the students not only meant imparting skills but also helping students early on to step back and analyze the sources of their feelings that they could not learn. Why did they feel like "they didn't matter," or that "nothing would come in"? Where did the label "stupid" or "slow" come from? "A person who can't read and write had a very hard time knowing what she's done. Like maybe she put her kids through school alone. But she still feels like she's done nothing," said another author.

"Believing" meant developing a more complex view of the literacy and illiteracy. Through dialogues with teachers and fellow students the authors learned they were not alone with their problem. "You get confidence seeing other people like you or worse than you" and "you realize you're all in the same boat," authors told me. They began to shift from

feeling as if "I failed" to understanding the role of school, teachers, family and society in their perceived failure. Some realized how "nobody told me how important it was." Others saw how "big time it was the men in my life" who constrained them. Others also came to recognize the role of their own self-attributions: "It wasn't people around me that made me feel that way, it was me."

Authors recalled many things teachers did to facilitate this learning process. One way was to help students examine ways they had successfully taught themselves in the past. Teachers asked students to recall how they had learned to play sports, become parents, and learned on the job. They helped them to recall examples of what Reder calls "spontaneous literacy acquisition" (1987). Lidia was able to recognize how as a teenager she had engaged her boss to teach her English at work. And, she recalled how, after leaving the factories, she was able to use what she knew about taking care of children to catapult her into a situation where she was able to teach them and herself with Sesame Street and alphabet books. Luther remembered how he got coworkers to teach him to "read" the routes for the ice cream truck, and how he taught himself to pass the driver's test. Another author, who saw only her illiteracy, looked back at how she'd learned to write phone messages dictated by her fellow housekeeper in the upstairs apartment and came to see that this was literacy.

We have seen the importance of instructional scaffolding. Among teachers in this study, believing in students, recognizing and validating their experiences until they could believe in themselves, might be seen as a unique kind of scaffolding they employed. Teachers helped students to recognize that learning requires periods of incubation and that sometimes plateaus were reached in learning. "You may get bored but then you get a little compliment out of it. And you feel good with yourself and you wanna do more and more."

With these feelings of group membership, teacher support and facility with reading and writing came growing, and perhaps all important, beliefs that:

> You can do anything you set your mind to. That's the bottom line. If you wanna do it, do it.
>
> I feel a lot of comfort in myself now than I was feeling when I couldn't read and write as good. I feel I ain't got to be ashamed as much now.
>
> There's still some things we have to learn. But doesn't everybody have to learn?

I Learned to Open Myself Up

For many authors literacy seemed to have come to stand for knowledge itself. To be illiterate was to be without knowledge, opinions or voice. A key part of learning associated with becoming authors seemed to have to do with first with gaining the confidence to speak up and give one's opinion and second with learning the authority of one's knowledge and experience.

"Before I always held myself in. I couldn't talk to people," the reader may remember Mattie saying. "I learned to open myself up--to tell other people who I feel inside," said another author. Sometimes this realization began before entering classes:

> I had a heart attack. They was tellin' me a lot of things, askin' me what I wanted to do and I told 'em I don't know. Seem like I could do things that I could never do before and I really wanted to go back to school I wanted to do it. And learn how to talk to people. I never could talk to people. I'd always hold everything in. And they told me, "Don't be shy, just talk out." People would always say things and I'd just sit there.

In the classroom this process of opening up was in part, an outcome of encouraging students to name their own purposes for writing and to take ownership, an element of effective instruction that Applebee and Langer summarize below:

> Effective instruction must allow room for students to have something of their own to say in their writing. Students must see the point of the task, beyond simple obedience to the teacher's demands. It is this sense of purposefulness that will integrate the various parts of the task into a coherent whole, providing a sense of direction. The focus must be on what is

> being accomplished through writing if the student is to learn procedures to carry out those purposes. (1987: 141)

Central to this process was dialogue. Many authors recall favorably how they were given plenty of time to talk as well as to write. "It helps us in meeting peoples and in talking," said one author. "So although the discussion after reading, might stray, it gets stories wrote." Mattie reflected proudly how at Editorial Committee meetings: "A lot of times we don't do a book. We sit there and talk about our problems, how we doin' in school and other stuff like that." That the conversation could move in the direction of problems students needed to solve is reflected in this description of a discussion at Read Write Now:

> We had a conversation one night about race and that he thought he was the only black person who couldn't read and write and how does that happen to other people. It was an incredible exchange. He felt the confidence to put himself out there. He just keeps hearing that it's OK and it's starting to contradict the message he got all the rest of his life. That he wasn't OK; that he didn't know anything. You know he was physically beaten around learning in school. They were beaten up if they had the wrong answer.

As authors began to get things down on paper, their sense of ownership of their ideas grew. "You can see it right in front of you. It's your own," said one. "Once you get it down on paper you can talk about it," said another. Authors commented that through sharing: "I learned what people is like and how they think"; "I see them for who they are more than before"; and "I felt like I could never be that honest."

Several authors commented that this process of ownership was facilitated by the way in which teachers stressed equal relationships between teacher and student. Some were alert to ways in which teachers might patronize or silence them, commenting that if unequal relationships had existed they would probably have just dropped out. A few, like Mattie, were now able to resist actively, rather than passively, when such teaching occurred.

> Before Greg became my teacher they would talk about slavery time, welfare stuff and there's nobody interested in it. Well, I come up with this. I say, "Hey, this is history for you. I lived it. Find something else for me to learn."

When asked what teachers should do, she suggested:

> I would talk to people about what's happening in the neighborhoods. It wouldn't have to be nothing special. Also let them read it - why you wrote the piece and different parts that you don't understand you could ask questions about it.

One factor that authors mentioned as contributing to their ability to open themselves up seemed to be a new typification of teachers. Several authors mentioned how the memory of their teacher making themselves vulnerable by sharing their own insecurities as authors was a turning point for them. A teacher in New York perhaps describes such a relationship best.

> I would write with them but not really. I was still the teacher and that wasn't really helpful. I realized that if I was going to be effective I had to share with them when I can't write.

On one occasion this teacher risked bringing in a difficult and very personal story. She recalls that "one guy in the program was very resistent to writing." When he saw her work he said, "I can't believe what a mess this is."

"It was a real breakthrough for him and they helped me through a hard time," she told me. In related incidents, authors at Opening Doors remember how one of their teachers, "who was a book writer himself," brought in all of his rejection slips, passed them around, and talked about how it felt. That such a process has value is echoed by Beck (1983) in his article "Self disclosure and the commitment to social change." He reflects that self disclosure humanizes the teacher and makes her more accessible. It reduces the student-teacher hierarchy without undermining the fact of the teacher's expertise and invites students to similar disclosure.

My Voice Matters: Seeing Yourself as an Author

Closely associated with speaking up for some authors seemed to be a growing conception of themselves as individuals capable of producing knowledge. As Lidia suggests:

> It wasn't just the ability to write because I'm still a lousy writer. It was the image of myself. I'm not just a little grain

> anymore. You know that grain went inside the ground and died but there was a plant that came out and is sprouting again, is going through branches. It's as if I'd known that all along and I thought, why did I think I was just a seed when I'd done so much in life without that reading and writing? Then I learned how to read and I still didn't know how to write. But unless you break free to form yourself and say, "It doesn't matter, I matter. Like I said, my voice does matter.

While such a change may have come from many sources in and outside the classroom, writing seems to have been one means through which authors could move from a position Freire and others characterize as "silence" to a growing recognition of the value of their own subjective knowledge. "I'm looking inside myself for ideas"; "there's a good story inside me"; and "I'm not just a "rinky dink person," authors said. "People outside have a lot of control over you. I'm sick of it. I want to take control of my own life," said another author.

Within this context, we are able to see more clearly why many authors placed such a high value on writing (and reading) "true" stories based on real-life experiences and on their concerns that everyone in the group be regarded as "equal." The quotes below illustrate how authors either saw, or came to see, their own subjective opinions as a source of knowledge and decision making:

> I used to be like that. I wanted other people to tell me what to do. If I do this, is it all right? I needed it, I don't need it anymore.

> You wanna know the truth? I don't think nobody knows any more than you and I do. Maybe reading and education, yes. But knowing about the world? I think I know as much as anybody else because I been through it. I know what it's like not to have to eat. Not to write. I always had to compete on top of that.

> You know a lot of people think they're better than they are. I don't think so. I think everybody's equal. That's the way I feel. The only expert on everything is God himself.

> That's why they're sending me out to Montpelier and I was on the news, you know, talk about the books and stuff. Before I always held myself in. Now I feel free. I do what I want. I get nervous. To show them we might be nervous but we got more power. I guess that's what you would call it. Yeah. I showed them that we were little but we got more

> power. . . . Sometimes they say, I could never be like this big person that did this but then you say, well, he's just like you.
>
> Wisdom doesn't come from a book. It comes from experience through age instead of knowledge. You got head knowledge, it doesn't go to the heart.

Certainly we can only speculate about whether or not such beliefs were a result of participating in literacy classes. Many may have held such beliefs for a long time. Or, such a changing perspective may have led the author to enter literacy classes in the first place. But it may also have been fostered by the process of producing what we learned in Chapter Two to be "internally persuasive discourse" and classroom discussions around context and issues such as the use of local language and dialects. Within every classroom in this study discussions took place, for example, related to whether one dialect was "better" than another and value of writing in language "ordinary" people could read took place. Several teachers mentioned the importance of helping students to value their own means of expression and its role in preserving the cultures of the learners, as expressed by this teacher:

> She'll say, " Augh, I don't wanna do that. Those are rich people's words. I'm not rich. I'm just a stupid Puerto Rican." But there's been a change. I'll catch her using a "rich people's word"....That's one of my struggles because I have to prepare them for the GED. That dry language in social studies books. It's rich people's language. But I also want to give their language back to them. The larger picture is it needs to be recognized as a legitimate form.

Sometimes having authored their own books helped authors to understand more clearly that what appears in print also can be subjective and sometimes less than the whole truth. While Lidia was writing her book, for example, a newspaper woman wrote a story about her, making her appear as if she could hardly read and write at all:

> You know when they put that in the paper. They put so many things that wasn't true. It made me feel like, "Oh, wow, why did they do that?" They twisted a lot of things the way they wasn't. I was never that stupid. It wasn't me. And when I talked to her she says, "Yeah, that's what motivates people to go to school." It bothered me, I want honesty. . . if I didn't gain self-esteem with myself that newspaper would have crushed me. You know what she says to me. "Well I teach as a volunteer." I said, "You don't do it with lies. If you can't teach the truth you shouldn't teach

> at all and you should not be a reporter cause a lot of people they read the paper and they believe exactly what they read." But now when I read the newspaper I say don't believe what you read. I think that's when it really started. Yes I believe a lot of those things you gotta use your common sense. Maybe it's true for this person but not for the other one.

Yet, in spite of this new understanding, Lidia still felt more comfortable seeing herself as a "giver" than a "knower." "Do you see yourself as a knowledgeable person?" I asked her. "Something tells me I am but I don't think so," she remarked. "It's not that it made me feel important," she said about sharing her writing with friends, but that, "I felt close to other people, like I can touch their lives." For her, the best way to express her knowledge was to place it in the context of generosity to others. Writing was a vehicle for that self-expression. "Whether you know it or not you have so many qualities you can give to others. But you already had it and you didn't know it because you couldn't put it on paper," she said.

Although none of the authors in this study expressed it as well as this author who wrote in Write First Time, sometimes they did indicate that they wondered if, by becoming literate that might lose something as well:

> If I could write and spell I wonder if I would take an interest in people as I do? Is it because I cannot spell that I do care? I remember when I was active in the trade union, there were people who went to the union official for union advice and because they could not explain themselves, the official didn't want to know. Then they came to me, and I would listen to the problem and work it out. It made me feel good to help, and for people to need my help. Was I boosting my ego, or was it to compensate for my lack of reading and writing: I wonder if I could read, write and spell with more ease, if I would have listened or even given my time? (Write First Time, Vol. 4, No. 2).

Learning That "Writing Is an Idea You Express"

As one teacher pointed out, it was important to help learners to speak out, but "you couldn't get away with just that." As many of these authors have found out the hard way, motivation alone is not enough. They also needed to be explicitly taught new processes and

perspectives. This study did not focus on the processes of learning to read and write that took place within classrooms. And in fact, authors found it very difficult to talk explicitly about specific learning processes in which they engaged, responding to questions about their classroom processes with answers such as, "Well in my classroom we all work together." Information about students strategies and moves in the classroom must be studied along with on-the-spot observation (Lytle, 1990). However, some statements can be made with respect to authors' perceptions of how their beliefs about those processes have changed by observing their responses to questions such as: What do you think writing is now? Is writing spelling? What makes a good writer? Are you a good writer? How have your ideas about writing changed?

Not surprisingly, many authors reported that when they came to the literacy program they primarily associated writing with spelling or handwriting. Like Lidia, several mentioned that they couldn't write because "maybe I never learned the law, how you're supposed to do it." They were very concerned with making surface level errors and believed they should be able to produce a flawless text on the first try. Several authors said something to the effect of Jose's words that, "sometimes I can't spell the word that I really want to put down and I have to switch it to another word I can spell and that makes it sound not too good." They had trouble "wording things" because they lost track of what they were trying to say as they wrote or because, as Jose put it, "I don't know how to tell a story correct." They did not know, they told me, that they could go back and change things or that writing involved planning and rereading.

Gradually, however, many authors seemed to be internalizing the distinction between composition and transcription. They began to learn that writing is first the expression of meaning and see the physical effort of writing, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, handwriting and so on in from a new perspective:

> No, that one [my teacher] taught me. [She] says to me writing is an idea you have to express. It doesn't matter, just get all the way you have it in your mind and put it on paper.

> Personally I think using your feelings, that's what makes good writer.
>
> The main thing, it should flow. If it doesn't flow, you're trying to correct somebody, impress somebody. It's when you try to break it down it doesn't flow.
>
> Writing to me it like a tool. If I write it down it goes into my memory bank. You write about it and it will come back to you.

Teachers mentioned trying to convey to them that even those who were less proficient writers might have good ideas and subtle ways of expressing them. They encouraged students to try to make optimum use of the language skills they did have. Some authors, like Lidia, discovered they could overcome their limited language skills through the use of metaphors. It allowed her to express new ideas and build new relationships even in cases where the vocabulary for such concepts was not available to her. For example, she used the metaphor of a body to express her beliefs about interdependency and that of "snowball going down the hill" to describe the cumulative effects of classroom interaction. Many others have used metaphors of "coming from darkness to light" or "coming out of a box" to express what it feels like to learn to read. As they did so they began to recognize that:

> Before I thought that only someone that was very, very bright could do this. Not ordinary people could do that. Somebody, you know, high.

An important part of this seemed to be a revised understanding that they would not find a magic key or "law" to unlock spelling and that even proficient writers had trouble:

> I found out that even people that went to college so many years they still didn't know how to spell that. So I said, it doesn't really matter. It made my load easier.

Authors began to realize that they could get help without seeing it as "cheating" and that they could write drafts with mistakes. They learned to leave a line for words they couldn't spell. A couple told me that when they came back they could correct it themselves. Several authors mentioned the knowledge that teachers would help them in editing the final draft encouraged them to take risks. Although not all the programs had access to computers, those that did indicated that seeing their work in print played a considerable role in helping

them to feel their work was legitimate. Seeing work in print helped them gained a new view of the efforts entailed in authorship:

> Now I think about the authors. How long it took them. Their frustrations. How many pages they got. Before I thought, it's a book, whoopee. It took two hours to write. Now I know.

As they continued writing, authors told me, they were buoyed by concrete evidence of change. They became able to use more conventional spelling: "This one is easier than the last one. I can spell a little bit more." Teachers mentioned that they began to be able to look back over their work and see that they were writing more, with longer sentences and were freer to express their ideas. A few of them told me they were beginning to learn they could move text around on the page and rearrange things:

> I write it and then I go back over it and change it and do all these things. . . . Like I go back and say, this word doesn't sound good, I change it and put something else.

> I made some changes and they were real good. . . . I had to change the part because it sounded like I was in love with her. I changed the color of her clothes. I added more, the way she wears her hat, that she's always smiling.

But in spite of these indications of change, most of these authors' views of writing still seemed to me to be in a process of transition. Most continued to be blocked by their inability to spell and to "get the words down." Ruth, one of the most proficient writers, told me:

> Right now I feel like I'm using the fact that I can't spell as an excuse. I still fear like I'm a terrible writer. It's hard to put things on paper.

Making the leap from thought to writing for some, like Jose, remained an obstacle. He would sit and puzzle over each word, stopping and starting until he had filled the table with false starts. One reason perhaps is that the work of putting words on paper caused him to forget what he wanted to say. But we might speculate that another reason is that he may not understand appropriate genre schemes for writing. It is possible that he has a limited understanding of devices of cohesion such as pronouns and conjunctions and of how a story

should unfold. Perhaps his limited experiences with reading hampered this or even his relative lack of access to talk in the past. Learned habits for avoiding writing may have also played a significant role. But, slowing, through use, he was learning that, "You have to go from one draft to another getting that fear away."

Luther's story perhaps most clearly illustrates how, for some, the growth between composition and transcription could be uneven. As you may recall, he took readily to the idea that he could "compose" on a tape recorder, with teachers as transcribers. "I already know how to write," he said about his work in a surprising reversal of the usual response of authors. Perhaps someday, with improved technology his tape recorder will be able to transcribe his words, but for now, his independence in writing is inhibited. He said:

> You know me. I never liked to write nothing if I couldn't spell it. I never liked it. It's really hard but now I'm doin' it. At first I didn't wanna do it. I tried everything to get out of it.

Teachers in this study expressed frustration because students had such a difficult time understanding how to revise their work. Part of this, one teacher told me, may have to do with competing purposes for writing. "If the primary motivation is to write to get relief or feel better, why should you revise it?" she asked, unsure to what extent she should encourage revision. Helping students to reread, revise and explore new kinds of writing were all areas to which many teachers were devoting their attention.

I Learned I Have Something to Give: Seeing Oneself as a Teacher

Another key finding in this study was the apparent growth provided to authors when they took the role of a teacher. In a climate where the constraints learners face often seem to overwhelm even the most remote possibilities for success, it shone as a glimmer of light on a sometimes dim horizon. It represented a breakthrough toward self-determination for authors at all three sites.

Mattie's experiences perhaps illustrates this best. Mattie, as we saw, began her writing in part as a way to teach her children. She remembers one of the purposes of writing her early piece about life on the farm was not just to remember it for herself, but also to teach her children that "it was a lot harder back then." Later, she communicated her feelings about the devastation of drugs as a way to get through to her son. As time went on, Mattie began to write to wider audiences about the drug problem and about the hardships of motherhood.

This growing sense of seeing herself as a teacher was fostered by opportunities created by her teachers. At first Greg Leeds and a fellow teacher, Loren McGrail, began sharing writing between their classes. Then, Mattie remembers, "Greg took me places. That's what started it." During the writing weekends of the Publishing for Literacy Project, Mattie read her poems out loud and, as a member of the Editorial Committee, encouraged other participants to begin to write. Later, through the "Author in the Classroom" project, teenage mothers requested that she visit their program. As you may recall, Mattie was both flattered and encouraged by the author's interest in her work and their belief that she must have been "at least in college" to be able to write so well.

By being seen as an author, Mattie began, in turn, to see herself as an author and as someone capable of giving knowledge to others. She began to be more confident to share her writing and her understanding of literacy, taking twenty-three copies of her anthologies with her on her trip to Chicago to see her niece and encouraging a class there to publish something because "they didn't have anything like that." Such actions, I believe, played a significant role in her growing belief that she could confront injustices in her own neighborhood. She could make others aware of "things going down" in the projects and, in so doing, transform, rather than being transformed by, her reality.

Other authors had similar experiences. Jose's decision to share his writing with high school students, I believe, was also a transformative experience for him. For another author

at the Publishing for Literacy Project, traveling to other parts of the state to talk to beginning authors also had an important effect. He said of that experience:

> I was at UMass, Amherst. At the time I did students there were just starting to read. I had one man ask for an autograph and he told me how two years ago he could only write his name and now he can read. And I told him, "You know, never get discouraged. You know you gotta look at it this way. The worst enemy you got is you. That's the biggest obstacle. You've broken the chattels and chains of your mind. A lot of people can't do that now. . . . Now you're at the point I took the step to do it, you have no right to be ashamed of that."

At the Opening Door Project, too, authors confirmed the notion that perhaps one of the best ways to cope with having suffered through oppression is to help others who have gone through the same experiences. Ruth remarked of her book that, "if it helps only one other person it's worth it." She was able to get her message across by speaking on a radio talk show, being interviewed by a newspaper reporter and even speaking at the state capitol. That these authors had grown in their self-confidence was illustrated by the fact that when at the last minute Ruth Barenbaum could not go with the group to give a training seminar to teachers, they decided to go alone. They ran the entire workshop successfully themselves.

For other authors, like Luther and Lidia, the teaching experience was more informal. Luther took on the role of helping new students in his classroom to learn how to talk to the teacher, gave them pep talks, and convinced them not to drop out. Lidia began to use her books at church and at home to recruit others to literacy. "People could call me. I would like that," she said when I asked if I could share her book with authors at the other sites in this study.

In ways that may have important implications for family literacy educators, authors also grew in their roles as teachers of their children. Lillian, you'll recall, after writing her story realized that "I'll never be that mean to my kids." She told me she tries harder now to get involved with her children's schooling and to offer advice. "I don't want my kids to be like me," she told me. Recent research shows that measures of home atmosphere are more strongly associated with student achievement than any measures of social status, including

income. If a mother attends as little as one parent involvement meeting during a child's elementary school years, the probability of the child's failure in school is significantly reduced (Kennedy, Jung & Orland, 1986). Seen in this light, parents' increased involvement with their children's schooling can be seen as a significant outcome for authors and their families. Increased levels of involvement were mentioned by most of the authors in this study who were parents. Luther, for example, told me his daughter is now going to summer school because "I'm makin' her." And, he tells his son, who has been identified as a slow learner, to "get a book and read something, even for a few minutes." "One thing about it," he said reflecting on his children's lives, "you learn from your experience. But you just hope it isn't too late when you get it."

People, we have seen, are defined and redefined in interaction with others. One powerful way to influence people's actions is to cast them into a certain role. Over time, they will begin to think of themselves in that manner. When people are placed in the role of "illiterate," as we have seen, they often learn to keep quiet and stay in the "back seat." But, as we see so clearly here, when they are cast in the role of an author--a maker of something a knower, creator, composer, teacher--they can come to claim that identity as their own. Such a value has implications not only for the author but for others as well, a fact we will we will consider again later in this study.

Changing Practices and Plans

As we saw in Chapter Two, we have only recently begun to conduct literacy research among varied groups with practices as a primary unit of observation and analysis. We still lack information for comparative studies of the range and variations of literacy practices at home, school and the workplace (Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). Changes in the everyday literacy practices of the authors in this study were not a primary unit of observation. And, often they found it difficult to remember and describe the kinds of writing they undertook

either before or after becoming authors. What's more, they may have completed the same writing tasks but with different modes of engagement (Lytle, 1990). But that being said, there are some general statements about authors perceptions of their writing practices which can be tentatively explored here. This section will look at those changing perceptions of practices along with authors' plans and hopes for the future.

Practices

All of the authors in this study came to the literacy classroom having some practice with writing. Luther could sign his name and made use of inventive ways to keep track of phone numbers. Lidia tried to write letters, even if no one could read them. Lillian had kept a diary and records of farming events. Jose was able to copy welding records from samples provided by coworkers and to dictate letters to his mother.

After joining classes authors mentioned many new kinds of writing practices in which they engaged outside of school. Among them were leaving notes for family members, keeping shopping lists, writing greeting cards, filling out catalog orders, filling in forms at the doctor's, taking notes at church meetings, writing notes to parents of day care children, keeping track of sports scores, jotting notes on calendars, writing letters to themselves and writing to family and friends. For a few authors, answering my letters for this study also represented a new practice.

As authors were able to successfully complete tasks, they began to take further risks in trying to use reading and writing.

> You don't really notice it at first but when you pick up a book and start seeing more words and start to go faster in your reading you can really see that you're improving and once you notice that you see that you've got your foot in the door. . . . No matter what level you start with.
>
> I used to memorize everything. Now I'm giving it a little break. I remember the first time I went to the bank. She showed me how to fill out the form and then after I went to open another one. . . . Like yesterday my husband gave me the form and it wasn't all filled out and I finished filling it

> out. After I come out and say, "Wow." I was so nervous I was starting to have these little shakies. And the doctor said it was fine.

As we have seen, many authors also began to work on their expressive writing at home as well as at school. Several authors reported staying awake nights rehearsing what they might write. Others began to carry papers with them "I jot down here, I jot down there" said Ruth. Mattie told me, "I got a little piece of paper and if I see something go through my mind I write it down. . . . Some papers I find much later. Then I write em up so I can put 'em in the book. "Now I'm more busy at home with a pencil" said Jose. Ruth reports she now is able to use the dictionary at home as an aid in her new fiction writing.

Several authors also reported using writing more at work. Randy is able to take notes at Monday morning staff meetings, Lidia is able to write down nursery rhymes and ideas for things to do with the kids. For some, knowing they could get the job done if something came up is a source of increased comfort and pride:

> I'm a door man. So like anything happens in the building I gotta write it in the notebook. Before I wasn't able to do that. I hadta bring notes and little words and memorize out of my little notebook. How do you spell this. But it's been getting better and better.
>
> Right now I can go out and make a work order. I can figure it out. I might not be able to spell everything but I can get the job done.
>
> Yeah. Like you're more relaxed at work. You don't have to worry about something come up and you can't write it down. Getting more information about my job . . . like if I got a different position in my job.
>
> Before I used to call up my girlfriend. She works upstairs. Now I can write it myself.

Plans

Authors beliefs about literacy practices are also evident when they talk about their overall intentions and specific plans for the future. The reader may recall Jose's statement that:

> Yeah. I can't go back. I figured if I had a job right now and I had to use reading or writing, I figure that it would be good for me. I think I could learn real fast. This one is like a story, part of my life, but ah on the job it's different writing but I think I could use it because there's a lot of words here that I knew how to spell.

Many authors' dreams for the future with respect to literacy had to do with getting jobs. Ruth and Lillian, both of whom have fairly stable access to literacy and GED classes in their communities, hope to continue their education and attain their GED, which they believe will improve their employment outlet. But they also placed a strong emphasis on the role of literacy in parenting and their desire to help themselves so they can, in turn, help their children.

All of these authors expressed a desire to continue to compose stories. Ruth commented that, "Yeah. It's in my blood . . . I've always tried to scribble down something, you know. But I've never had the courage before to keep going." For Lillian, the writing group has become her "second family" and she hopes to continue to write for Homegrown Books, especially stories for children. Another author at the Publishing for Literacy Project told me that "I have other books that are stuck in my head that I wanna work on." Luther has dreams of finishing his article about homelessness and poverty in the Bronx and other writing.

But these plans are tempered with a sometimes acute awareness of situational constraints. Lidia's poor health has made it difficult to attend classes. If there were another writing workshop that met infrequently she might be able to continue with her dream of writing children's stories, but at the time of our last interview she was unable to make it to classes which are held several times a week. Mattie goes to the writing group when she can, but her failing health, and her need to take care of her family, especially her developmentally disabled son, sometimes gets in the way. It may take her a long time to realize her goal of getting a GED, even if the literacy programs available to her can remain open.

Jose and Luther have fewer personal constraints but, like Mattie, they are restricted by the availability of programs. Both have told me they would like to spend more hours in

school. "If I was going to school five days a week I would completely relearn," Jose reflected sadly. But he and Luther are limited to six hours of classes a week, and restricted times of the day. The program they are going to is the only one in their area and, as we saw, has been threatened with closure and is sometimes forced to cancel classes so teachers can write grants for continued funding.

Their teacher reflects that, under those conditions, it is easy for them to forget what they have learned or to fail to see consistent progress. This is exacerbated by high staff turnover and limitations on teachers' time. When I asked Jose to write to me about his program, which was then in the midst of its latest funding difficulties, he composed an article which ended with these words:

> I used to write alone and feel good about it because I brought stuff with me from school and I knew what to do. But now the hours and the teachers are switching around and I stopped writing at home. It seems like I am beginning to learn again, like I forgot what I learned before. I pick up books and put them down, never finish them. I used to finish books when I used to read. . . . Before I felt that I could make it. Now it's different. I'm lost now.

Luther wonders if he will ever reach his goals:

> I'm in my thirties now, just about my forties and the way I see it now, what bothers me now that I got a feelin' I'm not gonna really make it to get half the things out I wanted to become or be what I wanna be. You see. And that hurts. You see once I start thinkin' back on that I sees it. . . . All the time you say it's your fault cause you couldn't learn. I wasn't feelin' cause I was stupid but it was something I wanted to achieve and I couldn't do it. And it made me more angry with the teacher because they didn't work with me. Like now I'm a lot older I go back home I see the A student, what they turned out to be, alcoholics and junkies, and I think about how I coulda been something and look at them now.

As Herbert Kohl so poignantly points out, literacy doesn't always mean liberation. "If anything it heightens one's consciousness of being oppressed and introduces a painful awareness of the contingency of oppression into previously resigned lives" (1990: 6). This, too, was a bitter outcome for several authors.

CHAPTER VII

ENTERING THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: THE PROMISES AND THE CONSTRAINTS

We have seen many outcomes of writing and publishing in these authors' lives. But does their work have a value in a wider cultural sense? What does it mean to enter what Maxine Greene (1986) calls a "public space"? What are the implications of this work for challenging prevailing stereotypes associated with less literate adults? Could these stories speak to audiences of adult beginning readers in ways other writing does not? And, if so, what factors in and outside the classroom constrain its realization? We will very briefly turn our attention to these hard questions--these promises and constraints--in this chapter.

Lessons from African American, Women and Worker Writers

Before considering what it might mean for adult beginning readers to become published, let us first take a brief excursion back into the histories of other groups whose voices have emerged from their silences. By looking at the experiences of women, African American and worker writers we may begin to recognize some important potentials and perils that result when those who have been unheard come to gain a collective voice.

Before the Harlem Renaissance of post-World War I, literary theorist Bernard Bell tells us the dominant group in our country often characterized African Americans as people without a culture. In The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition (1987) he describes how novelists and poets used their writing as a way to overcome that perception. He quotes Langston Hughes words from that period:

> We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not it doesn't matter. . . . We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves. (from "The Negro and the Racial Mountain" quoted on p. 93)

Bell describes how, in the decades that followed, writing allowed authors to characterize the odyssey of a people in search of freedom and self-fulfillment. He cites Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man as the quintessential example. In this novel Ellison follows the journey of a nameless man: from a youth spent repressing his true identity, to a growing awareness of his cultural heritage, to the painful rejection of white culture, and, finally, to self-realization and integration of his past and with his present. Ellison's own writing was also such an integration. He describes how he first recognized that he too was an heir to "the human experience which is literature" (1987: 203). And it was from those traditions, particularly from Eliot and Joyce, that he was able to develop his awareness of the literary value of his own black folk heritage.

Over time, Bell illustrates, dozens of writers turned the social tensions of maintaining a "double consciousness" into cultural energy. Some like James Baldwin evoked the myths, legends, and language of Africa. Slave narratives and black autobiographies were brought back from obscurity, as in the case of Alice Walker's revival of Zora Neale Hurston's books, among them Their Eyes Were Watching God, first published in 1937. Of particular interest to adult literacy students has been the work of Malcolm X, who rose from illiteracy to make a series of transformations in his life. Such writing led to an ethnic identity among African Americans, but they also made those experiences accessible to white culture. These authors played a powerful role in relating local experience to broader social meanings. Ellison commented that:

> Taken as a whole, its spirituals along with its blues, jazz and folk tales, it has. . . much to tell us of the faith, humor and adaptability to reality necessary to live in a world which has taken on much of the insecurity and blues-like absurdity known to those who brought it into being. For those who are able to translate its meaning to wider, more precise vocabularies it has much to offer indeed. (cited in Bell, 1987: 203)

Within the woman's movement, too, writers played an important role. In Writing a Woman's Life Carolyn Heilbrun analyzes how autobiographical writing allowed women to

uncover new identities for themselves and to participate in a rewriting of "the patriarchal script." "Women will starve in silence until new stories are created which confer on them the power of naming themselves," she begins her book, quoting Sandra Gilbert and Susan Guber (1988: 33). Writing about one's life, says Heilbrun, was a vehicle through which to bring to light issues of power and sexual politics integral to "leading that life rather than being led by it" (1988: 32).

> The true representation of power is not of a big man beating a smaller man or a woman. Power is the ability to take one's place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one's part matter. This is true in the Pentagon, in marriage, in friendship, and in politics. (1988:18)

Heilbrun demonstrates how a woman's right to her own story depends on her ability to express her true feelings and to act in the public domain. She marks 1973 as a watershed for modern women's autobiography.

> The transformation in question can be seen most clearly in the American poet, novelist and memoirist May Sarton. Her Planet Dreaming Deep, an extraordinary and beautiful account of her adventure in buying a house and living alone, published in 1968, eventually dismayed her as she came to realize that none of the anger, passionate struggle, or despair of her life was revealed in the book. She had not intentionally concealed her pain: she had written in the old genre of female autobiography, which tends to find beauty even in pain and to transform rage into spiritual acceptance. Later, reading her idealized life in the hopeful eyes of those who saw her as exemplar, she realized that, in ignoring her rage and pain, she had unintentionally been less than honest. Changing times helped bring her to this realization. In her next book, Journal of a Solitude, she deliberately set out to recount the pain of the years covered by Planet Dreaming Deep. (1988: 12-13)

Heilbrun credits Adrienne Rich, whose autobiography is not found in a single book, but in her poems and interspersed in her prose, as having done more than anyone else to revolutionize women's autobiography. She describes how Rich sought to both recognize herself as a poet and to disassociate herself with the notion that a poem should be universal, gender-neutral and a-political. Rich reflects that in writing her ground-breaking Of Woman

Born for months she buried herself in historical research and analysis to delay plunging into the use of the word "I" (1988: 68).

> It is Rich's generation of women poets--Plath, Sexton, Kumin Kizer, Cooper, Levertov--that T.S. Eliot's ban upon the persona was defied . . . . If women's autobiography has made a great leap it has not done so without great pain and courage on the part of women like Rich. (1988: 69)

As time went on, African American women authors like Alice Walker, Barbara Christian and Toni Morrison also sought to balance racial with feminist identities, confronting and distinguishing themselves from white feminism (Bell, 1987: 242). These authors played an important role in recognizing the importance of writing about ordinary and disenfranchised women. "The dumb go down in history and disappear" wrote Toni Morrison (cited in Gardner, 1987:13). Diane Johnson's The True History of the First Mrs. Meredith and Other Lesser Lives was succeeded by biographies of black women, revolutionary women and pioneers in formerly male professions (Bell, 1988: 26). And, oral histories began to increasingly take root.

The need to fill the vacuum of existing knowledge also created new innovations in education and research. Women writing collectives illuminated the value of making group activities collective rather than competitive and, by emphasizing personal experience, stressed interpretation over evaluation (Fox, 1990). Women developmental psychologists expanded their work to take into account women's "different voices." They brought into view a concept of identity that takes into account interconnection; a moral dimension of responsibility and care; and an epistemological shift toward knowing as a process of human relationship (Gilligan, 1982: 173). Through their work researchers began to acknowledge the difficulties associated with hearing and interpreting what "others" say when they speak.

As we saw in Chapter Three worker writing groups, particularly in Great Britain also moved in related directions during the seventies. The history of these groups is recounted in The Republic of Letters: Working Class Writing and Publishing (Morley & Worpole, 1987). Forming the Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers, they encouraged

alternative and community presses to use new off-set lithography to increase local control, participation and distribution of worker writing. Like the other groups mentioned, these authors sought to develop new identities, in this case among working class people, and to bring to light injustices they faced. One of their groups, Centerprise, wrote of their work:

> Much has been written about the East End of London--
> academics have studied it, the media have caricatured it--but
> there is nothing that can have remained as faithful to detail
> and human spirit as the residents' own recollections . . . .
> There is nothing more damning of poverty than the memory
> of its victims.

As Jay Robinson reminds us, "A fact of life in our world is that the possession of literacy is correlated almost perfectly with the possession of power and wealth. And in general the more literacy one has or can control the more power one can exercise" (1990:23). But, as he is quick to point out, this does not imply causation, "to achieve literacy does not necessarily earn one power" (1990:23). Brain (1988) in his study of working class autobiography found that this writing could more often be characterized as voices of prisoners rather than voices of freedom. Worker autobiography in the 19th century was only permitted to exist if it fit within a framework acceptable to the middle class; many of those most popular confirmed the stereotypical view that working class people were poor, decent and incapable. "Those works that did not were repressed by economic means and by means of isolation (nonpublication)" (1988:41).

The Power of the Simple Truth: Adult Beginning Writers in the Public Space

> These are voices I have never encountered on the page before . . . . I could not stop reading their words and I will not forget their stories: they reaffirmed an old faith of mine--the simple truth has enormous power.
>
> Phillip Levine--Two term winner of National Book Critic's Circle Award about Opening Doors Books

Of course there are many differences between these often highly educated and expert writers and the experiences of the beginning readers in this study. But there are also parallels and lessons to be learned: the need to reject fear and shame, the struggle to express anger honestly, the transformative steps toward representing themselves in the face of the powerful representations of others. It may be difficult for those of us for whom reading and writing is taken for granted to hear in the writing of adult beginning readers the full intensity of their pride and feelings of power (Gardner,1987) but I believe it is there if we attend carefully to their words. And, perhaps more importantly, as the quotes below indicate, other beginning readers hear it as well:

> I think this kind of writing can identify with people that is coming back. It gives a connection with the realization that it can be done. And not to feel ashamed of your accomplishments or like you're on the back burner, in the back seat.
>
> Its a good story because its the truth. From the bottom they worked themselves up. You don't have to feel down on yourself.
>
> I think these are people with real feelings.
>
> I would like to write a book too. About my whole family.
>
> We have to fight to put *these* [emphasis mine] stories on television.
>
> I would tell them that someday they will get to the hard books but for now these are the best to read.
>
> It would make me feel good. If she did it, I can do it. Mostly we literacy people write little short things, like one or two word things and you put all these things together and all of a sudden you start doin' things.

And from teachers come these words:

> I couldn't believe how much students loved that book--Remembering. At the end they list the person's name and city. They were so interested in looking to see what area the writer was from. They couldn't believe someone like them, who lived nearby, was in the book.
>
> Well in groups people are generally more interested when they read a book written by another learner. Anything people think is true, written from real experience, that's really fascinating reading. Something that's fantasy or fiction they can't identify with is less interesting.
>
> They wrote on the board things they knew about Mattie--things that I didn't even know. It was interesting because it was the beginnings of critical analysis of writing. They had left it on the board when we got in. . . . They would ask Mattie questions and then say to each other, "Yeah, you see, I told you so."
>
> It was so simple but clear. It was just there.
>
> We knew theoretically it would happen but students read those stories and they are told they are written by students like themselves. . . . They were really hungry for copies and I always asked them, why they want it and they'd say, "I'm going to write my own story too. Before they really didn't see--they couldn't write something like this. I think that's what this project does, it democratizes. It gives a sense that everybody can write a story and make their interests known.

What is it about the best of these stories that moves us, or other new readers who encounter them? A good story has a vision; it "touches me inside," says Marilyn Boutwell about stories she has read. We will not attempt here to characterize that elusive quality called voice. But it may be helpful to look more closely at what Harold Rosen calls "authenticity." Authentic writing, he says citing Labov, "elicits within us a deep and attentive silence that is never found in academic and political discussion" (1988:81). It does so, he suggests, because:

1. the power of narrative in general corresponds to a way of thinking and imagining
2. it speaks with the voice of "commonsense"
3. it invites us to consider not only the results of understanding but to live through the processes of reaching it
4. it never tears asunder ideas and feelings; it *moves* us by permitting us to enter the living space of another: it is perceived as testimony
5. it specifically provides for the complicit engagement of the reader. (1988: 81)

These stories touch us, I believe, because in their heartfelt honesty and simplicity we know they are true in the eyes of the speaker. They present a language and point of view we, as proficient readers, rarely see in print. And, my discussions with other beginning readers indicate that, for some at least, they provide models for what is possible, just as Baldwin or Rich provided models for other groups. The stories represent to beginning readers often heroic attempts to survive, summed up perhaps best by these words written by one of the authors in this study: "So life is tough, but we got to make the best."

An authentic hero, Jack Mezirow has reflected, is someone who personifies our ideas, touches our firmly held convictions, provides us with self-confirmation and the recognition of a shared commitment to an ideal. We might conjecture that for an adult beginning reader, someone like them who manages to write a book is, in a very real sense, a hero or heroine. The simple truths in the story of a man who overcomes drug addiction, a woman who survives child abuse, a child who undergoes the trauma of being left-handed, an immigrant who lives through a war may indeed speak for many others who have been silent but whose experiences are not unlike theirs.

It may be, an administrator at one of the sites suggested, that these writers are creating a new genre--the "short hard times." And, if we look at genre as a way of thinking and learning, a set of rules for creating text (Rosen, 1988: 78) such a statement may not be without its merits. Some genres, says Rosen, offer greater possibilities for certain purposes than others. The purpose of a "short hard times," if we may stretch a bit to call it a genre, may well be to show that a beginning reader, in spite of economic and social obstacles, can come to succeed in the world and become a model for others who believe they cannot.

In "Composing One's Self in a Discipline: Students' and Teachers' Negotiations" (1990) Herrington, using Geertz' metaphor of the "intellectual village," found that students needed repeated occasions to try out those ways of thinking and speaking associated with a professional and academic discipline if they were to develop their own way of thinking and identity within that community; to "compose themselves into the village and learn to use the

conventions to make their own claims" (1990: 4). If such a need exists among other communities--college students, women's groups, African American writers, might it also exist among communities of beginning readers? Might they too need an accessible model through which to try out ways of thinking and speaking unique to their needs and learn to use those conventions to make *their* own claims?

Such ideas are as yet speculation. As we have seen, few authors at this point in time have had the opportunity to read books by other beginning writers, or to critically assess their value. Even in programs where learners write and publish, often writing by other beginning readers does not circulate within the classroom. And, as we will see in the next section, a multitude of constraints work against their further development and distribution. But I believe it is worth considering the role these authors might play both for those of us who stand outside their world and for those inside it. Those authors who have learned to structure their experiences and look through wider and more diverse perspectives at the world they live in (Green, 1982) may well be gatekeepers into the experiences and ways of knowing of this population we know so little about. If "short hard times" do have the opportunity to flourish, we might then be able to subject such speculations to the scrutiny of readers.

External Constraints

Such lofty goals seem idealistic indeed when compared to the bleak climate for adult literacy in the United States. As we have seen, less than five percent of those who might be eligible for literacy instruction are served by programs. And, among funded programs, competing perspectives as to the purposes of literacy exist. As Kenneth Levine pointed out in his article, "Functional Literacy: Fond Hopes and False Economies" (1982) the dominant view remains that relatively low standards of achievement will directly result in a set of universally desired outcomes, such as employment and social integration. Fingeret (1988)

has pointed out how in recent years, as funding for literacy has increasingly been tied to employment and pre-employment training, the perspective that economic efficiency is the only legitimate rationale for literacy work has gained currency, sometimes even to the extent of displacing economic issues onto literacy. This trend, she says, leads policy makers to look for the short term, cost-benefits of literacy instruction--how instruction will translate into less absenteeism and higher profits. Such a view is exacerbated by the lack of professionally trained teachers who can help them to design programs that take into account the complexities of literacy instruction.

A few programs, as we have seen, have been able to convince funding sources to provide backing for the teaching of writing and for publishing within literacy programs, mostly on a grassroots level. Funding has come primarily from community-based educational programs but also from libraries, departments of education, humanities projects and volunteer programs. But even within these programs competing views of the purpose of writing and publishing exist (Jurmo, 1987). Many argue for the use of writing on the basis of efficiency, as an effective means to teach skills that will eventually allow learners to adapt to the needs of society. Others see it in terms of individual, personal development, as a way to help learners name their own goals. Those programs which see literacy as a means for social change may espouse both those aims, while also seeing writing as a means of political and social enfranchisement. Such programs may also be reluctant to state their ultimate aims, which may not be shared by funders or others in their organization. A social change perspective has never been widely accepted.

The nature of the writing process, however, if examined critically, brings these issues back to center stage. John Clifford asks:

> Do we want our students to write correctly formed, grammatical, sophisticated essays that reinscribe what society already believes, or do we want them to create alternative ways of being in the world, however imperfectly transcribed, however tentatively formulated? These are different goals. The first preserves a society's dominant values; the second skeptically interrogates them. (1990: 255)

These questions come into play when literacy programs seek funds for programs which involve learners in writing and publishing. As we will see more later, policy makers who fund writing programs often walk a fine line between hoping they will be successful in promoting efficiency and personal development and worrying that if they do become successful they will create within programs a new set of desires and interests to which funders will be hard pressed to respond, or even more overtly, be in a position of censoring. The lack of funds for research into the effectiveness of writing in literacy classrooms and the unstable funding for model programs which do exist aggravate this problem.

Many years ago Virginia Wolfe realized that "a woman must have a room of her own and money to write fiction." So, too, do literacy learners face such a reality. But even if they do obtain funding, there are other factors that get in the way of their ability to become writers. We will now consider some of those internal constraints.

Internal Constraints

Many of the internal constraints to writing and publishing have to do with the single most important element: teachers. Within adult literacy, few teachers have access to training which would provide them with the knowledge and experience necessary to implement effective writing workshops. Recent figures show that in 1988 volunteer and part-time staff:

> made up 92 percent of all teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals working in state-administered ABE programs funded under the federal Adult Basic Education Act. This was up from 68 percent in 1980. Full-time paid personnel declined from 32 percent of the total ABE workforce in 1980 to 8 percent, while volunteers increased by 186 percent and part-time personnel by 87 percent. (Business Council for Effective Literacy, 1990)

Unlike in many public school where teachers have time for training such as those offered by the National Writing Project, many adult literacy teachers receive little more than short initial training in the basics of teaching reading. Many have never themselves written as part of a

group. Their own fears about writing present a formidable obstacle to their own teaching. Lacking experience with writing they may express beliefs such as: my students can't write because they can't spell, they need to be given some stimuli to write, or they can't write because they don't know standard English. They may focus on the technologies of writing almost to the exclusion of meaningful content. Not realizing that students can write with a level of content sophistication beyond what they expect. Such a perspective is often reinforced by commercial materials designed, in turn, to reach teachers with little background knowledge of literacy.

As Applebee and Langer (1987) point out, even among public school teachers, for whom access to training is much greater, teachers often replace a set of skill activities with an equally disconnected set of "writing process" activities. Without knowledge of the underlying concepts they often fail to take advantage of writing's potential for facilitating higher order thinking skills. As one teacher told me, "Our tutors and students are doing language experience. But when its done it just goes into the folder and they take out the workbooks."

Lack of training and sometimes experience also prevents teachers from knowing about the social context of learning. Although within the field of adult literacy, the rhetoric of learner-centered and participatory education is pervasive, many teachers just don't know how to encourage participation. They may express the opinion that it is not their job to be a "therapist" and overlook the vital role of dialogue in the writing and learning process. They may unknowingly fail to give learners the time they need to feel comfortable in the classroom, recreating the impressions of this author:

> It doesn't take that much time. The person who can't read and write, he can see it. They know. What they do they just don't go to school anymore. I've seen it sometimes myself. They just don't realize. People who don't know how to read and write, they can see things. They got a lot of power that way.

This problem is aggravated by the lack of materials that might provide teachers with the understanding they need. Materials written by researchers are all too often of little

practical value to busy teachers. Teacher handbooks that do bridge the gap are often of in-house reproduction quality and poorly distributed. Even among teachers who do find published research accessible, there is little time in their schedule for self-education. One teacher told me:

> I was listening to your question about how did you find out about the writing process and I brought myself into this insecure place. . . . You feel sometimes you're not keeping up....I never get to sit down and read. You know, we give each other xeroxes and we probably read them six months later.

And, even if teachers arrive at these new understandings, there are still other hurdles. Within a single program teachers may hold competing values. One teacher told me: "In some ways I hate to say it but the obstacle has been the other teachers...It seems like an extracurricular activity to them. It's just not integrated in."

Even with training, internalizing the idea of writing as a meaning- making process only comes with experience. The words of Loren McGrail illustrate how she learned over time:

> Even the best of teachers didn't really quite believe it was enough to respond to students' first draft simply by focussing on meaning--the compulsion to correct, to do something was so strong. I was very unclear about where correction came in and so in the beginning I tried to do it at the same time as sharing and learned that doesn't work very well. They aren't the same thing. Although on a security level students really liked it. They thought, "this is what we're supposed to do--we write and then we correct."...I made little worksheets . . . but what would happen was when they went back to write they would never use that information. And then I saw that when they really rewrote--the ones who did a better job and analyzed it better they weren't doing a better job because their sentences were more together. They had actually added more information and done different things with the writing. . . . I'm lucky that my instincts as a teacher were when things don't work well I'm willing to put them aside.

Teachers face many kinds of judgment calls as they facilitate writing. They have to strike a balance between reading and writing, skills and meaning, drafting and revision, challenging learners to explore new genres and supporting what they do produce. While they need to guard against students' feelings of inadequacy, teachers also need to be careful not to

shield them completely from the real world of competition and criticism. At Opening Doors, teachers found that competition among the authors provided an incentive and focussed their concentration. At another project, one which rejected the idea of competition, one teacher commented that, "When the state started their project, it sounded like it would be a contest. In the end they took everything. In the real world you wouldn't get published that way."

"Is it overly generous to validate content that is not all that remarkable?" one literacy researcher asked me. Teachers need to ask themselves which standards for judgment are helpful to their students and which are overly congratulatory, create a sense of false pride or even false consciousness. In this regard, one teacher had this to say:

> Sometimes writers become "queen for a day." They go to a dinner and are given a lot of recognition and the next day they are back down in the slum. We have to prepare our students to go from being a big fish in a little pond to a world where being a writer is very competitive and very political business, and one that is financially risky as well.

In publishing teachers also have to reconcile the dual aims of encouraging students to feel ownership of their writing on the one hand and producing a high quality finished publication on the other. This authors of Getting There: Producing Photostories with Immigrant Women (Bardnt, Cristell & Marino, 1982) address this question in their book, describing how in the final stages of their publication they ended up making crucial decisions about the content and the contradictions this revealed to them. While they hoped to bring these controversies to the learners for their discussion and analysis lack of time presented a serious obstacle. Other teachers I interviewed expressed similar concerns: "We thought we would get them more involved but we ran out of time," said one. "That's the kind of thing we didn't do. Maybe we could next year. Maybe its like year after year you learn something from each year," said another hopefully.

Juggling these many responsibilities is an often daunting undertaking for teachers who are isolated from the benefits of learning from their colleagues. "The problem is isolation and lack of networking," said one teacher. "We could all be offering each other support, joint projects and technical assistance if we knew each other." "I feel like I'm working in a

vacuum," said another. Under such conditions it is often difficult to sustain the considerable energy it takes to write and publish with students. Often teachers are also discouraged from publishing by the lack of a means to share what is produced. These books are "falling into a void" Ruth Barenbaum lamented to me, pointing out that authors of the Opening Doors books have received almost no response from readers of their books. "I hope you uncover vast hordes of easy to read materials," another teacher told me, unaware even of the existence of materials within her own state. In places like New York City, where such networks are available, one teacher told me, "Once I got out of isolation, you couldn't convince me to go back. I need to know what other teachers are doing."

Censorship and the Politics of Publishing

Finally, in cases where internal constraints are overcome, some teachers may also be faced with political questions related to publishing what may prove to be controversial pieces of writing. As Harold Rosen points out, "The less constrained the discourse the more likely it is to have recourse to narrative. Spontaneous speech narrative is the most difficult kind of language to censor (1986: 230). The direct language in writing by beginning readers often creates such concerns. By censoring authors, even in subtle ways, teachers feel they may work toward the institutionalization of yet another form of silencing. But on the other hand, as one teacher told me, "I don't know if I can justify losing the program over this story. You know, it isn't going to change anything anyway." Decision-making, she said, is especially difficult for her because it is so difficult to convey to her students the full implications of censorship.

Among the practitioners I interviewed, various kinds of criticism of the content of their authors' work have been mentioned. In one case, it was simply the expression that topics such as rape and child abuse were inappropriate for the literacy classroom. In another a teacher told me he "got a lot of flak from [our funders]. They wanted correct English,

correct everything. One of them said, "this is trash". They just didn't see the process through which this is produced." The administrator at that program told me:

> These programs have gone directly to the market. It won't be long before institutions will begin to intervene. Our institutional backing is on the side of the trustees. If there were a scathing criticism of the magazine, I'm sure it would have to close down.

In another case an administrator described to me how a corporate funder of a writing contest pulled out when they saw that the content of the writings addressed homelessness, AIDS and poverty issues. Commercial publishers are also not unaware of these problems. "We think it would bring up a lot of problems to publish work by students," one major literacy publisher told me reluctantly.

In England, where writing by learners has been openly resistent, censorship issues have been more overtly discussed. The members of the Collective for Write First Time, the British newspaper mentioned in Chapter Three, cite the beginning of the end of their publication as 1982, when an article about Mrs. Thatcher was received by the editorial group of local students and teachers in Birmingham. "The piece was frankly critical and expressed that criticism in the sort of direct language that makes much of the writing in the paper such good reading" (1985:5). After much discussion that article was printed.

In an article in one of the last issues of the newspaper, (1985) the Collective described the events that followed as they saw them. Not long after the issue was printed a new grant was applied for. The Collective learned that funders had doubts about whether to continue the grant. Editorial control seemed to be the issue. For the Collective this was a difficult problem since for them "editorial control" meant making decisions as a group. In order to receive continued funds, the group agreed with their funder, ALBSU, to include three "senior educationalists" (James Britton, interestingly, among them) to aid in keeping the editorial process under review. The grant was awarded, with funds to last through the March, 1985 issue. In the next grant period, Write First Time did not receive ALBSU funding. Some people felt the project had run its course, and that ALBSU should not be in

the business of giving permanent funds to any one group. Others, Collective members among them, felt that there was a link to events in 1983 and the decision to end the paper. March, 1985 was the last issue of what had been the only example of a student-run newspaper with a national readership.

Summary

These are perhaps only some of the complex issues with which literacy practitioners have to deal if they are to help beginning readers to enter the public domain as authors. Yet, in spite of these considerable obstacles, dedicated teachers and learners still look for ways to publish. In fact, the demand for learner-written books seems to be increasing.
If it does, we need to keep in mind that, while such books offer openings and possibilities, entering a "public space" is only a beginning, not an end in itself. Even when adult beginning readers in this study did come to see that they possessed within their communities common sense, wisdom, dignity and a version of the truth that deserves preserving, this sometimes served to make more visible their relative lack of authority rather than allowing them to take part in public discourse from a position of equal power. Even language itself was not neutral, scholarly discourse was privileged over narrative; standard English over other dialects. In the present climate, the path teachers and authors had to walk between promise and constraint was narrow indeed.

CHAPTER VIII
CONCLUSIONS

This study only begins to explore the role writing plays, and could play, in the lives of adult beginning readers. We cannot make broad generalizations from the experiences of only a few authors. Many more studies of writing in varied contexts and with diverse groups of learners are needed to gain a fuller picture of writing in adult literacy. The findings of this study do, however, suggest a series of issues that merit our concern as well as research topics we might explore further. In this chapter I will first summarize what I believe to be the central findings of the field study before discussing their implications for researchers. Following that I would like to suggest several implications for the consideration of practitioners and policy makers.

Summary of Findings

What do these authors' experiences, taken together, tell us about adult literacy learning? Perhaps what stands out most clearly is the fact that, for so many I interviewed, literacy was about much more than simply the acquisition of new skills. Becoming literate in our society, these authors told me, also meant overcoming certain internalized beliefs with respect to literacy, learning, teaching, and even knowledge itself.

Although most authors acknowledged their competence in areas of their lives such as parenting or work, nearly everyone spoke of having taken on the dominant social construction of illiteracy: that to be illiterate is to be lacking in certain kinds of intellectual and social competencies. This perspective, as we saw, was shaped by interactions in school and everyday life. Authors' perceptions of themselves as illiterate played a vital role in their self concept: their identity, how they judged themselves and how they then acted in the world. Even though they had acquired many kinds of knowledge throughout their lives, and

even though they could accomplish literacy tasks through their social networks, many authors nevertheless somehow felt their knowledge was diminished because they lacked this "missing piece" that was literacy. Many felt they had to hide their illiteracy and sometimes, therefore, themselves. For many the sense of having failed with respect to literacy was so pervasive that they had come to believe they could never learn to read and write. For learners in this study, then, a key part of literacy learning appeared to be replacing those internalized feelings of incompetence with new conceptions of themselves as able learners and as sources of knowledge and authority. Writing and the social process associated with it appeared to be useful, in part, because it was a means to that end.

When authors began to write, they used this process to accomplish many often overlapping purposes. Some used writing as a visible means to acknowledge their commitment to literacy learning: to themselves, their teachers and others. Among these authors, autobiographical writing predominated. Authors wrote about their lives to describe and examine their personal identities. They wrote to tell their children what their lives had been like, to remember the good and the bad times, and to make sense of them in light of new understandings. Often writing accomplished the therapeutic purpose of getting memories out of one's system and led to a feeling of relief. As authors began to recognize that their experiences could be provide lessons to others, they began to use their life stories as a way to teach and offer advice to their children, classmates and others they felt might have gone through difficulties like their own. They told readers what it was like to have lived through sexual abuse, to have been punished for being left-handed, to see one's children become addicted to drugs, to have gone through life unable to read. But the stories were not all about sadness. They were also about success. Authors shared stories of valuable lessons learned from grandparents, of happy times with their children, of what it meant to, finally, achieve success in literacy learning, and of how they wanted their communities to change.

Most learners did not enter the classroom with the expectation that writing of this kind would be part of their classroom activities. Most associated writing with filling in the

blanks or spelling. But once they began to write, the authors embraced these broader purposes for learning with enthusiasm, writing at home for themselves as well as at school. The process led to various kinds of changes, according to these authors. For some, who had been reluctant to speak up, getting things down on paper and sharing it with the group provided an opportunity to learn how to express their thoughts and opinions, both orally and through writing. This, in turn, led to a growing sense that, as Lidia put it, "I matter. My voice matters." Others in the group helped them to validate their own authority and experience. Authors placed a high value on collaboration in their writing groups, on subjective understanding and on the notion that everyone in the group was equal.

The process of becoming a published author also provided authors with interactions which solidified their sense of themselves as knowledgeable. Being seen as an author in various contexts allowed them to see themselves as a teacher or an expert. Sometimes this occurred in informal ways. Lidia used her book to recruit her friends to literacy. Luther found ways to advise his classmates about how to talk to their teachers. Lillian shared her book with her children and used it as a way to talk with them about school. Other times teaching occurred in more formal contexts. Authors visited other writing classrooms as teachers, they gave training workshops for teachers, they spoke on radio talk shows and read their works at public meetings.

Through this process, authors had also begun, tentatively, to move from seeing writing only as spelling to a new understanding of writing as "an idea you have to express". They began to allow themselves to get things down on paper before worrying about producing a flawless text. Many, however, still struggled with just getting the words down and seemed to find it difficult to yet focus on issues of revision and audience.

When authors were asked about how their everyday practices had changed many indicated increased use of literacy at home and at work. (Although a few told me their use of writing had not changed outside school.) Those that did report changes mentioned leaving notes for family members, writing letters, keeping sports scores, taking notes at work and at

church, and other practices. Some also worked on personal stories at home or kept diaries. When asked about their plans for the future several authors reported feeling greater comfort that they would be able to take on a job that involved writing. Some mentioned plans for parenting activities in the future. Several authors were taking more active roles in community and church groups. Nearly every author told me he or she would like to continue with literacy classes. However, such a dream was discouraged by the realization on the part of some that adequate classes were not available to them.

Many factors in and outside the classroom facilitated these changes. The group interaction in the classroom appeared to be one positive influence. For these authors literacy was not a "loner's game". They described their classmates and teachers as a "second family". Dialogue seemed to be central to every aspect of the process. Learners had opportunities to talk with one another about their lives, what school was like and issues in their communities. They discussed topics for writing, wrote together, shared their writing and collaborated in the publishing process. The authors were supported in these pursuits by teachers who used various kinds of instructional scaffolding to help learners to move toward greater autonomy. Teachers tried to make learning appropriate to students' needs, to encourage a sense of ownership and collaboration and to support students' efforts toward becoming proficient writers. Authors' growth was buoyed by support from family members, who often read what authors had written and provided encouragement at home and by attending publication celebrations.

But various aspects of the family and school environment were also mentioned by authors as constraining factors. Families were not universally supportive. Some criticized what the authors wrote or questioned their exposure of family difficulties. In others cases, although they did not state this explicitly, authors seemed to both long for and fear changing roles within the family that might result from their increased independence with respect to literacy. But the obstacle mentioned most often by authors was the relative lack of availability of classes and access to teachers. For some, like Jose, who had now made the

commitment to literacy, there was the bitter realization that classes were only available to him a few hours a week. Some, like Mattie, saw funds cut for the writing weekends she had worked so hard to build. Given these constraints, it was difficult to hope that one could "completely relearn".

Implications for Researchers

These findings point toward several potential directions researchers might pursue related to the social context of literacy, literacy learning in adulthood, writing in adult literacy instruction and collaborative research. Those described below are only a few.

Researchers need to explore further the role of beliefs in literacy learning. If it is indeed true that beliefs play a central role in literacy learning, then we need to look more closely at how adult beginning readers conceptions of literacy, learning, teaching and knowledge are constructed. Such research could provide vital clues to how learners might be helped to overcome internalized feelings of inadequacy with respect to literacy learning. To reach such an understanding we need many more intensive studies of learners, following events and behaviors over time under conditions where learners feel free to reveal their life histories and closely-held beliefs. Many studies of adult literacy (Lytle, 1990; Beder & Valentine, 1990; Fingeret, 1983; Street, 1984; Reder, 1987; Johnson, 1985) have already begun such investigations. Since we know learners are not a homogeneous group (Hunter & Harman, 1979; Beder & Valentine, 1990; Hayes, 1990) we need to study many kinds of beginning adult learners. Would younger adult learners have different experiences than those in this study, who were of middle-age? Are women's experiences different than men's? And what about second language learners, members of various cultural groups, people in rural and urban settings? We need to explore how the context of the learning process impacts on changing beliefs by studying how learning takes place in community-based, one-to-one volunteer, family literacy and workplace settings. Writing may well be one among

many useful tools for investigating this issue, since it allows authors not only to reveal but also to discover their beliefs during the writing process.

Researchers need to learn more about how literacy beliefs, processes, practices and plans interact in adult literacy learning. Related to the previous issue, is the need to take into account not only just beliefs but also how those beliefs interact with learners' everyday practices, classroom processes and plans (Lytle, 1990). Although existing studies of literacy in the community have provided a valuable beginning (Heath, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Reder, 1987; Weinstein-Shr, 1986) we need more ethnographic studies of the range and variation of literacy activities in which learners engage in their everyday lives. These studies need to be linked to ongoing observations in the classroom, to see the connections between practices and the moment-to-moment transactions learners have with texts.

Researchers need to investigate how adult learners identify and elaborate their purposes for literacy. In this study, authors identified purposes for literacy beyond those of economic betterment or instrumental need. Writing was a vehicle for investigating one's personal identity, establishing rapport with family members and teaching others about life in the community. This points to the need to investigate more deeply what it is learners want to accomplish through literacy learning beyond simply the acquisition of skills. Within that, we need specifically to study how learners choose their purposes for writing within the context of the writing process. What is the teacher's role in the kinds of writing that gets done? Would expressive writing dominate in other contexts with adult beginning readers? Would other kinds of writing, such as essays or fiction, produce different outcomes among the authors? Do various kinds of learners choose to write for different purposes than the ones expressed by these authors? Does personal writing transfer to increased ability in writing related to functional skills such as work-related writing?

Researchers need to explore how a writing process approach might facilitate or impede effective learning, learner retention and participation. As we have seen, in the

adult literacy classrooms studied here, the writing process approach provided a means through which both to teach skills and to encourage group interaction and greater connections between home and school. We need to explore what factors in the classroom facilitate or impede the development of a sense of ownership on the part of learners, collaboration and the internalization of new literacy practices. We need to investigate classrooms as complex social sites. The social roles of teachers and learners need to be studied to see how learners are enabled or constrained, how they are silenced and how they resist. What impact does a learner-centered process have on drop-out rates? On achievement as measured externally? What kinds of links are made between school life and the home and community as a result of this process?

Researchers need to involve teachers and learners in the research process. As we have seen, to understand how beliefs, processes, practices and plans interact in the lives of adult learners implies a process of co-investigation with learners and their teachers. Their involvement is important, however, not only because it is necessary for the research, but also on moral and political grounds. Those we study have the right to participate in decisions that claim to produce knowledge about them. And, they also have a right to share in the products of research which we claim, at least, is aimed at furthering their interests. The process of involving learners and teachers in research is fraught with complex problems, however. I would like to diverge a moment here to reflect on questions I encountered in trying to involve teachers and learners in this study.

Reflections on the Research Process

I began this study with the intention to make the research a process of mutual inquiry with learners and teachers. Having been a teacher, I was well aware of the experience of having researchers rush in, collect their data and leave the site with nothing in return. Perhaps the most important way I tried to work against this was by attempting to make the

interviews themselves an opportunity for the authors to organize and make sense of their experiences and ask their own questions (Mischler, 1986). This, in turn, generated new questions for the second set of interviews. During one of those interviews, an author suggested that he'd like to try corresponding with me. His idea led to letter correspondence with other authors as well, offering a chance not only for us to reflect on the research questions but also for the authors to practice their literacy. I also tried to use my visits as an opportunity to share what I was learning with teachers. By my last site visit my car was filled with four large cardboard boxes of learner-written materials. On one or two occasions I was able to share this information more formally by giving short workshops for teachers at the sites.

Participation and reciprocity was limited by many factors, however. The sites were distant from one another and from my home and my time at each site was limited. The teachers, who were already overburdened with their own responsibilities, also had limited time. That they were able to give the time they did to work with authors to read the transcripts, to verify the data and to provide comments is only a small indication of their commitment to the field.

The authors' difficulty reading what I wrote presented further questions related to ownership and sharing of the research findings. Although many authors initially agreed to participate in this study because their teachers asked them, when I told them the purpose of the study was to create a better understanding of what it meant to be an author, many embraced their contribution with a level of commitment and heartfelt dedication I could not have expected. They wanted very much and very sincerely to be able to give advice to teachers and others who were learning how to read and write. Many encouraged me to use their real names in the study not only because "they're gonna figure it out anyway" but also because they wanted those who read their stories to be convinced of their veracity. Not only did they take the greatest risks in exposing themselves in this study, they also sent me letters

I knew took hours to compose and demonstrated a great interest in the findings. Oral historian Daphne Patai eloquently points out some of the contradictions this reveals:

> We ask of the people we interview the kind of revelation of their inner life that normally occurs in situations of great intimacy and within the private realm. . . . Although our informants agree to the interview and frequently seen to derive satisfactions from it, the fact remains that it is we who are using them for our projects. Further more the collecting of personal narratives, when done with professional and publishing goals in mind invariably is in part an economic matter. . . . The person telling his or her own story can be construed conventionally enough to be in possession of raw material, without which the entrepreneurial researcher could not perform the labor of producing a text. It is the researcher who owns or has access to the means of production capable of transforming the spoke words into a commodity. While this may not be the main function of oral histories, life history studies or cultural histories using "native informants" it is certainly one of the functions of such texts. (1988: 6-7)

As this study evolved for an audience of researchers necessary to meet my own academic requirement, its potential to reach authors, or even teachers, began to seem ever more distant. Carolyn Heilbrun, describes such a dilemma in her field:

> Feminist criticism, scholarship, and theory have gone further in the last two decades than I, even in my most intense time of hope, could have envisioned. Yet I find myself today profoundly worried about the dissemination of these important new ideas to the general body of women, conscious or unconscious of the need to retell and reencounter their lives. I brood also on the dissensions that have grown among feminist scholars and theoreticians. . . . There is a real danger that in rewriting the patriarchal text, scholars will get lost in the intellectual ramifications of their disciplines and fail to reach out to the women whose lives must be rewritten with the aid of the new intellectual constructs. I mean no -anti- intellectual complaint here. Without intellectual and theoretical underpinnings, no movement can succeed; the failure of feminism to sustain itself in previous incarnations may well be attributable to its lack of underlying theoretical discourse. But we are in danger of redefining the theory and scholarship at the expense of the lives of the women who need to experience the fruits of research. (1988: 20)

My interviews had made me aware of the fact that adult beginning readers came to the literacy classroom with their own theories about literacy. They had benefited a good deal from gaining access to alternative conceptions of literacy offered by their teachers. Part of

the process of becoming literate, I had come to see, was acquiring an expanded understanding of literacy and learning, which had its roots in theoretical constructs. Columbian participatory researcher Orlando Fals Borda (1988) points out that people at varying levels of education can benefit from the results even of highly theoretical studies. Even those with no literacy can gain access to some aspects of that knowledge if it is presented in the form of oral stories, photo studies and music. Easy-to- read material, he suggests, can also be created which contains essential concepts related to the findings of our research.

His ideas, I have come to believe, offer important directions for literacy researchers who want to share their knowledge with learners. We need to explore ways to present our findings to learners through, for example, stories, problem-posing and interactive activities, so that learners can reflect on the outcomes, use the information to inform their learning and perhaps come up with new interpretations we have not yet thought of.

Implications for Practitioners

Such implications bring us inevitably back to the primary link with learners: their teachers. The issues below address concerns directly related to what takes place within classrooms.

Teachers need to help learners to determine their wider purposes for literacy in a spirit of co-investigation. Writing may be one tool in this process. While there is a need for more formal, systematic research about adult beginning readers' purposes and literacy practices, teachers and learners can also investigate these issues in more informal ways. As we saw in this study, authors reported valuable benefits from discussions of their past literacy practices and their feelings about reading and writing. Such activities helped them to realize they are not alone in their beliefs about literacy and to articulate their own purposes and

needs. In classrooms, teachers need to find ways to facilitate such discussions early in the learning process and link them to writing activities.

Teachers also need to help learners to become aware of the various kinds of literacy which are possible, both in the school context and in daily life. For example, in presenting writing, teachers might discuss different potential purposes for writing, including not only expressive but also persuasive, informative and creative writing. They might suggest links between parenting and writing and ways to reach a particular audience in their community. They might help learners explore purposes for writing and reading in their family, social, recreational and spiritual lives in addition to addressing purposes related to employment. In an environment where retention rates are low, co-investigation might also be directed toward helping learners to voice their concerns about what goes on in literacy classes and to talk about the factors that cause them to drop out.

Teachers need to further explore how writing can be a tool for both effective and collaborative learning. One of apparent strengths of the writing process is that it can provide both for mechanisms for participation and, at the same time, for a means to practice effective reading and writing skills. We are, however, just beginning to develop our understanding of how the writing process approach can be adapted to adult literacy populations. Teachers who are exploring such integrations need to be encouraged to share their experiences. For example, the British training manual Opening Time: A Writing Resource Packet Written by Students in Basic Education offers a valuable model not only for communicating the everyday experiences of writers but also for how to simultaneously make the production of such materials a learning process for students. Teachers may also want to consider how they might demonstrate the effectiveness of this model to educators and funders. In order to be accepted as valid within education's dominant discourse, such projects may find it in their interest to subject learners' progress to the scrutiny of external evaluations.

Teachers need to investigate the roles learners might play as teachers and advisors. As we saw in this study, authors often mentioned having the opportunity to take on the role of a teacher as a pivotal and transformative experience. If this is indeed true for other learners, then we need to consider such an activity as a learning strategy itself. Within the classroom further means for learners to teach each others might be found. Within programs, opportunities for learners to serve as advisors need to be further as explored. Public readings of author writing can be encouraged, both at school and in the community both to create better public awareness and perhaps to recruit learners to literacy. Being in a position to present themselves to others as authors, rather than token learners, may facilitate beginning readers' more genuine participation in these activities.

Teachers need to find ways to use and learner-written materials in the classroom. Although many programs are beginning to write and publish, fewer are using learner-written materials in integral ways within the classroom. In this study we saw that such materials may be of special value to learners. Learners had a strong interest in reading life stories, particularly of the experiences of others whose lives were not unlike their own. Such materials offered authentic themes for discussion less often addressed in commercial materials. Stories by other beginning readers who have succeeded in literacy learning may provide inspiration and advice to the new reader, as well as accessible models for how to begin writing themselves. Such a sharing of publications has the potential at least for allowing authors to establish a discourse directly with one another, rather than depending entirely on teachers to help them meet their needs to communicate with learners in other programs. Teachers also need to develop methods for using such materials as a basis for the teaching of writing and reading skills.

Implications for Policy Makers

We need to promote programs which reflect a wider conception of literacy and literacy learning. Literacy is currently often conceived in narrow terms. The trend is toward program competencies built around employers' needs for a better trained workforce and society's need for more educated citizens. While these may reflect legitimate interests of our society, the deeper question of whose ends should be served by literacy remains a central question. Are the programs described here making the best use of instructional time, funders might ask? Would learners have been better off spending more of their class hours on concrete vocational or life skills, such as filling out work orders or learning to write checks? After all, writing stories about their lives will not put bread on their tables. We need, I believe, to reconsider the conception of literacy as only the acquisition of a set of measurable competencies. Such a narrow conception does not take into account the role of beliefs in learning: the need for adults to make sense of their previous experiences in order to make a commitment to literacy and to the arduous task of learning to read and write as an adult. Learners, I would submit, need to see the goals of the program as their goals and to use literacy to the ends they choose if they are to sustain themselves through the learning process. It is through this path that they might begin to achieve a greater ability problem-solve, to work as a team and to become self-sufficient with respect to reading and writing, goals employers claim they now need from workers in our technologically complex society. As Jay Robinson reminds us:

> No one becomes literate who does not glimpse and then come to feel some possibilities, no matter how tightly constrained, to shape the meanings that inevitably control one's life. (1990: 313)

Why can't people come to literacy simply for functional reasons alone? One reason, as this study alludes, is that literacy is not only about learning skills, but also about unlearning certain internalized beliefs and coming to believe that one's knowledge and

experience can count in our society. Policy makers need to recognize this broader dimension of literacy learning.

We need to advocate for increased funding for adult literacy. As we learned from several authors, making a commitment to learning to read and write is not enough. Such a transformation can result in despair if one then realizes that there exist no programs to meet one's educational needs. Currently programs are available only for a very small percentage of those who might be eligible for them. In such a climate it is small wonder that learners fail to believe they can learn. What it perhaps of greatest import in this study is not the existence of programs such as those that write and publish but their relative absence. Although there are certainly more programs than I was able to find and list in the annotated bibliography, nevertheless, it is remarkable that those I did find can fit on just over a dozen pages. Lists of similar kinds of programs for children or college students would fill an entire book!

Publicity about adult literacy belies the relative absence of funding. Those of us interested in literacy need to find better ways to promote public awareness of the needs of adult beginning readers and advocate for their educational needs. Learner-written stories, with their power to convey authentic experiences, may be a potential tool for communicating to public audiences both the consequences of illiteracy and the outcomes of becoming more fully literate.

In a climate where funding is limited, we need also to find new ways for individuals to improve their literacy skills outside the formal context of schools. For the most part we have relied on one-to-one volunteers to accomplish those ends. However, this study indicates that various kinds of community writing workshops may be an alternative strategy. Writers might benefit from intensive writing weekends and short-term writing workshops sponsored, for example, by humanities groups, housing projects, homeless shelters, women's groups or family literacy projects. In an environment where writers at many levels of proficiency work together, often better writers could help those who were less able, again with a reduced need

for formal teachers. Since everyone writes together, this experience may foster a sense of equality and mutual accomplishment in ways often difficult to achieve in tutoring situations.

We need to provide teachers with access to research, training and networking. Limited funding has also impinged on literacy teachers' ability to receive the education and training they need to implement effective classrooms. Few of the full-time teachers in this study had any direct access to training in the writing process. Those who worked part-time or as volunteers had even less. Although much has been learned about the teaching of both reading and writing in the last ten years, many teachers are unaware of new research findings. Unlike teachers of children, who have participated in workshops provided by the National Writing Project, there exist within adult literacy few direct links between researchers and practitioners.

Even mechanisms for sharing experiences locally among practitioners is limited. As I traveled among literacy projects I was struck by how many writing and publishing projects had sprung up in programs over the last four or five years. But, it was also remarkable how few programs knew about what each other were doing. Often I found even programs in the same city were unaware of each other's activities. On the one hand, programs producing materials felt as if their books were falling into a vacuum and on the other teachers lamented about how few books appropriate to their students' needs were available. Such a reality creates a self-perpetuating cycle. Literacy programs are seen to be ineffective and thus underfunded while at the same time the training teachers need to create effective programs is often unavailable.

We need to develop a national network for the collection, promotion and distribution of learner and teacher-written materials. In spite of growing interest in writing and publishing for adult beginning readers and learners of English as a Second Language, no mechanism for dissemination of materials or information about how they are produced yet exists in the United States. Programs that produce materials each have to engage in their own, time-consuming process of promoting their materials. When innovative leaders in the

field move on, the knowledge they have gained essentially disappears. Programs fail to have the opportunity to learn from the experiences of others about seeking funding, implementing programs or producing materials. And, opportunities for learners and others to read the work of these new authors is diminished.

We in the United States need to set up our own clearinghouse for the dissemination of learner-written materials and locally produced works by teachers. We may be able to learn from the experiences of networks in Great Britain, such as the Federation of Worker Writer and Publishers and from publishers of learner-written materials in Great Britain, such as AVANTI and ALBSU about how they have distributed materials for sale and shared resources. Lessons might also be learned from networks here in the United States, such as the Adult Literacy and Technology Network, which distributes information about computer-based literacy and the National Writing Project which provides public school teachers with training in the field of writing. Other groups such as the Modern Language Association and humanities groups could provide vital public recognition and support for such an endeavor.

A national network might serve many purposes. First such a project could serve as a central clearinghouse where programs could send materials to be reproduced and sold to other programs around the country. These materials could be promoted not only to a student and teacher audience but to others as well. Such materials might offer researchers, funders, and other community groups additional insights into the interests and needs of beginning readers. Such a network might also provide technical assistance to programs, including training in the implementation of writing workshops, information about how to produce publications, and sources for the funding of projects.

At the celebration of his 92nd birthday in New York, someone asked John Dewey to sum up what he had learned in his many years as an educator. His answer was succinct. "Democracy begins in conversation" (cited in Becker, 1988). As we have seen in this study, we need to start many more conversations among and between researchers, policy makers and practitioners. But, as Dewey suggests, if we are to achieve our ideals for a

democratic society we also need to listen to those whose voices have too often been made invisible. We need to include adult beginning readers in our research conversations, asking them to help us determine what questions should get asked. We also need to acknowledge their literature and find ways for their voices to be heard. Such levels of inclusion will not resolve the underlying conditions that give rise to their marginalization. But they would be an important beginning.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Name or Pseudonym	Age	Marital Status	Children	Work	Time in Program	Years in School
Jose	43	S	0	UE	24 mo.	7
Charles	35	M	3	UE	24 mo.	6
Rick	30	D	3	maintenance	23 mo.	10
Larry	55	M	3	driver	24 mo.	to age 16
Ruth	29	D	1	homemaker	48 mo.	+10
Mattie	55	W	7	homemaker	24 mo.	to age 15
Sue	50's	W	1	UE	24 mo.	2
Carmen	45	M	2	care of disabled spouse	18 mo.	3
Lina	45	M	1	cook	18 mo.	2
Lidia	51	M	4	childcare	18 mo.	+ 3
Helen	46	D	1	housecleaner	36 mo.	4
Carlos	35	M	0	doorman	6 mo.	8
Lillian	47	M	3	homemaker	36 mo.	8
Randy	33	M	1	construction	36 mo.	12
Joan	50	M	3	UE	24 mo.	7
Cindy	39	D	3	UE	12 mo.	8
Pauline	32	S	0	literacy aide	36 mo.	+ 9
Luther	39	D	3	maintenance	24 mo.	10

EXPLANATION TO APPENDIX A
PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Name: Except where requested to use the author's real name, names are pseudonyms chosen to closely match the gender and ethnicity of the participant

Marital Status: M=married; S=single; D=divorced; W= widowed

Work: UE=Unemployed

Time in Program: Time (in months) in current literacy program

Grade Finished: self-reported last grade finished in public or private school as child, or age finished if grade not identified

APPENDIX B
PRACTITIONER INTERVIEWS

Cathy Baker
Push Literacy Action Now
Washington, D.C.

Ruth Barenbaum
Tutor - Adult Basic Education
Bristol, VT

Betsy Bedell
Director
Jewish Vocational Services
Boston, MA

Tami Bolinger
Clearinghouse for Adult Education
U.S. Department of Education
Washington, D.C.

Marilyn Boutwell
Associate Director
Literacy Volunteers of New York City
New York, NY

Linda Brown
Teacher
City College of New York
New York, NY

Carol Cameron
Library Literacy Officer
U.S. Department of Education
Washington, D.C.

Deidre Freeman
Adult Education Director
International Ladies Garment Workers Union
New York, NY

John Garvey
Professor, City College of New York
New York, NY

Sara Hill
Resource Specialist
Literacy Assistance Center
New York, NY

Janet Isserlis
Teacher
International Institute
Providence, RI

Judith Lashov
Regional Coordinator-ABE
Rutland, VT

Paul Jurmo
Senior Program Associate
Business Council for Effective Literacy
New York, NY

Janet Kelly
Program Manager-Teacher
Read Write Now
Springfield, MA

Kona Khasu
Coordinator, Publishing for Literacy Project
Adult Literacy Resource Institute
Boston, MA

Ann Lawerence
Education Director
New York City Library Centers for Reading and Writing
New York, NY

Phyllis MacAdam
Kentucky Humanities Council
Lexington, KY

Loren McGrail
Advisor, Publishing for Literacy Project
Adult Literacy Resource Institute
Boston, MA

Rachel Martin
Writing and Literacy Consultant
Watertown, MA

Lucia Nunez
Teacher
CARE Center
Holyoke, MA

David Rosen
Director
Adult Literacy Resource Institute
Boston, MA

Christine Smith
Literacy Consultant
World Education
Boston, MA

Jean Smith
Educational Coordinator
Center for Literacy
Philadelphia, PA

Lee Weinstein
Voices Magazine
Surry, British Columbia

Lindy Whiton
Former Director
The Literacy Project
Greenfield, MA

Marcie Wolfe
Institute for Literacy Studies
Lehman College
The Bronx, NY

APPENDIX C
INITIAL GUIDING FRAMEWORK FOR
AUTHOR INTERVIEWS

Past Conceptions and Practices

What was learning to write (and read) like for you when you were in school?

What people or things helped you with reading and writing then?

What things got in the way?

Did your family read and write at home?

What did you think reading and writing was back then? How did you feel about writing?

Tell me about your life as an adult.

In what ways did you use writing (and reading)? At home? At work?

Tell me about your coming to the literacy center. What made you decide to come?

Writing at the Literacy Center

Tell me about your writing history at the literacy center. Ask person to bring copies of their writing so far. Discuss last piece of writing first and then go back to the first piece written, mapping the history. Probe for:

> 1) date written; 2) purpose, how topic chosen; 3) audience in mind prior to and during writing; 3) place where writing took place; 4) people who helped or got in the way-teachers, peers, people at home, critical events; 5) how author got ideas for writing; 6) revisions made in piece; 7) whether computer was used; 8) if piece was published; 9) readers of text; 10) overall perceived value once piece was completed.

Current Conceptions of Literacy

What/who has helped you the most with your writing?

What has gotten in the way?

What do you think writing is now? What makes a good writer? Have your views on this changed?

Has your feeling about yourself changed since becoming an author? How?
What caused this change?

Do you think the writing you have done has helped you in any way as a worker? A parent? A person?

Current Uses of Literacy

How do you use writing now? At home? At work? At school?

Have you read any writings by other beginning readers? Which ones? Where did you see them?

How do you see yourself changing in the future? Do you see yourself using wriitng in the future? How?

Recommendations

Do you think it is a good idea for literacy students to write and publish? Why?

What advice would you give other adults who are starting to write and publish?

What advice would you give their teachers?

Are there any questions I should have asked you that would help me understand what being a writer is like for you?

APPENDIX D
SAMPLE REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

932 Second Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 684-8167

August 6, 1990

Olive Gamble
Project Read
San Francisco Public Library
Civic Center
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Olive:

For many years I have been working as a teacher and researcher in adult literacy. Now, as part of my doctoral research I am looking more closely at issues related to writing and publishing by adult beginning readers. Over the past few months I have conducted in-depth interviews with many adult new readers who have become authors to learn about their perceptions of the meaning and value of writing and publishing in their lives. I have also spoken with teachers, administrators and librarians in programs in Boston, New York City, Vermont, Western Massachusetts, Philadelphia and Washington, D. C. to get their views on the writing process and the value of writing and publishing.

Almost everyone has remarked about the problem of isolation. They know more and more programs are beginning to involve students in writing and publishing but they have neither the time nor the resources to find out what others are doing. No collection of learner-written materials exists. The only way to find out about publications is to contact individuals around the country, one at a time. As it stands now I have many examples of writing from the East Coast but almost nothing from the West and nothing at all from any projects in California. Dreams in Our Book project and Yarns and Stories of the Humboldt Literacy project are the only ones I know of. Yet I know more must exist.

This is where I am asking for your help. I have heard your program has publications and that you may know of programs in California in which beginning to pre-GED level adult students are "making public" texts--whether they are program brochures, short pieces in newsletters, video scripts, or anthologies. I'm interested in small projects as well as the more "glossy" ones, in order to get a sense of the scope of projects that currently exist. If it is possible for you to send me copies of the texts or program materials which describe these projects I would be very grateful. I've included a short form and a self-addressed envelope to make this a bit easier. Truly, even a scribbled note in pencil would be welcome. In exchange, if you express an interest, I will try to get you a copy of the annotated bibliography which I hope will be an outcome of this part of the project.

Thank you very much for your help. I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Gillespie

APPENDIX E
PRACTITIONER QUESTIONNAIRE

BIBLIOGRAPHY PROJECT
WRITING AND PUBLISHING BY ADULT BEGINNING READERS IN THE UNITED STATES

Part of my research involves collecting together publications by adult beginning readers from around the United States, including in-house newsletters, local anthologies and books. I know you are busy. Please feel free to jot your responses in pencil and return them in the enclosed envelope. Indicate if you would like to receive a copy of the results. Thank you very much.

1) Do you know of any projects in your local area or state that involve adult beginning readers in writing and publishing? Could you write the names of the publications and how to get them, or send along a copy?

2) If you use writing and publishing in your program, could you list one or two of the factors that influenced you to begin? (Please include a program brochure or handout if it is relevant.)

3) What have you observed to be the value of writing and publishing--both for your students and for those who read the publications? Can you describe any incidents that illustrate this?

APPENDIX F
LEARNER WRITTEN PUBLICATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES
AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography is not a comprehensive listing of all of the programs that involve adult beginning readers in writing and publishing around the United States. No such listing currently exists. However, it may give the reader some idea of the scope and nature of many programs and publications and help the reader to make contacts in their area. Special thanks to Therese Broderick (Literacy Committee, New York Library Association), Paul Jurmo (Business Council for Effective Literacy) and Marilyn Boutwell (Literacy Volunteers of New York City) for sharing their lists.

Alaska

Alaska Humanities Forum, 430 West Seventh Ave., Suite 1, Anchorage, AL 99501.

> This program has published Literacy, Exploration, and the Humanities in Alaska, a report from the Alaska Humanities Forum which contains information about writing by beginning readers.

Literacy Council of Alaska, 823 3rd Ave, Fairbanks, AL 99701.

> The Literacy Council Newsletter contains a section called "Students in the Spotlight," containing stories, about topics such as whaling and life in Alaska.

South East Alaska Literacy Program, 210 Ferry Way, Suite 200, Juneau, AL 99801.

> Their Literacy Letter includes a student writing section.

Arkansas

Literacy Council of Pulaski County, 110 W. 13th St., Little Rock, AR 72202.

> Along with the Little Rock Job Corps Center this group produces a student newsletter, Student Express.

California

Emerson Adult Center, 8810 Emerson Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90045.

> Publishes Inside Emerson, a newsletter by students at Emerson Adult Center.

Hope Publishing House, P.O. Box 60008, Pasadena, CA 91106.

> This small publishing house produced The Story of Ana/ La Historia de Ana, a book written by Ely Patricia Martinez Vasquez along with Ana Lorena Sanarabia in both English and Spanish.

Humboldt Literacy Project, 931 Third St., Eureka, CA 95501.

This project periodically produces a student anthology, Yarns and Stories, which includes many language experience stories. The project director has also been associated with producing Inside View, a publication written by individuals who are incarcerated.

New Words Digest, P.O. Box 6276, Bakersfield, CA 93386-6276 .

This anthology is available for $12.95 per year.

Palm Springs Public Library, Palms Springs, CA.

This library produced an anthology New Reader's Voices. In 1987 students were asked to write about the theme of freedom.

Project Read, 840 W. Orange Ave., South San Francisco, CA 94080.

In 1988 the project published The Dreams in Our Book, an anthology produced by beginning readers and their tutors. Five chapters include: Moving Towards the Dream, Beginnings, Family, Special Times, and Point of View.

READ Radio Project, Siskiyou County READ Project, Inc., c/o Siskiyou County Library, 730 Fourth Street, Yreka, CA 96097.

The READ Radio Project produced 12 radio programs consisting of short stories written by local citizens. The stories, with commentary and introduction by a local literacy coordinator, aired twice weekly.

Readers RadioWest, 6050 Canterbury Drive #F303, Culver City, CA 90230.

"Working in California" is a project which produces audio cassettes and booklets exploring different labor themes for adult readers and literacy classes. By December, 1989 300 demonstration copies reached adult education programs through the California Youth Authority, Employment Development Department, and California Department of Education.

San Francisco Public Library, Project READ, Civic Center, San Francisco, CA 94102.

This project publishes The Dreaded Word Box an anthology of writings. Students from several libraries also contributed to another collection, called The Drum.

District of Columbia

District of Columbia Public Library, Adult Basic Education Office, Martin Luther Kind Memorial Library, 401 G. St. N.W., Washington, D.C..

New Writers Workshops: Spring, 1990 is a collection of the poetry and prose written by adult learners who took part in a series of poetry workshops in the District of Columbia. The workshops were sponsored by the District of Columbia Community Humanities Council and coordinated by staff at the

District of Columbia Public Library. Each workshop was hosted by a different literacy service provider and included a professional guest poet.

Georgia

Literacy Volunteers of America-Metro Atlanta, 480 Lindbergh Rd. N.E., Atlanta, GA 30324.

Students share stories in the quarterly newsletter, The Tutor Times.

Idaho

North Idaho College, ABE Program, 1000 Garden Ave. West, Coeur d' Alene, ID 83814.

Publish various kinds of learner-writing.

Illinois

Chicago Public Library, The Chicago Public Housing Literacy Initiative, 1224 W. Van Buren Suite 650, Chicago, IL 60607.

Gente a Gente-People to People (1989) is an anthology based on a cultural exchange between primarily Black and Latino communities at four family literacy sites in Chicago, including Universidad Popular, Stateway Gardens, Casa Atzlan and Henry Horner Homes. The anthology includes stories, poems, art work and recipes.
The Chronicle of the Chicago Public Library Literacy Inititiative for Chicago Housing Authority Residents (1989) is a history of the literacy project and includes poetry and stories by students about their experiences in literacy programs.

Hispanic Literacy Council, P.0. Box 08277, Chicago, IL 60608.

Since 1987 The Hispanic Literacy Council has published Boletin, a magazine which includes contributions in Spanish and English from members of community-based Latino organizations such as the Instituto del Progreso, Por Un Barrio Mejor, Casa Aztlan, Universidad Popular, Latino Youth and Centro Romero. The magazine highlights many pieces written by ESL and literacy students by placing them in shaded boxes and in centerfolds. Articles often focus on improving public schools and on social justice.

Latino Youth, 1827 W. Cullerton, Chicago, IL 60608.

This organization publishes a quarterly newsletter, PARA. Young people write about being teenage fathers and other critical problems they face.

Indiana

Indiana Adult Literacy Coalition. Contact: Division of Adult Education, Department of Education, State House, Room 229, Indianapolis, IN 46204.

Kenneth Hackler, Sr., a literacy student from Goshen, Indiana wrote There Can Be Hope, a book of poems published through a local library.

Kentucky

Eastern Kentucky University, English Program, 217 Wallace Bldg., Richmond, KY 40475.

Slices of Life: Kentucky Writers for Kentucky Readers is a two volume series of writings by literacy students around the state, focussing especially on rural life. The books were printed on newsprint with a colorful quilt design cover by the Lexington Herald-Leader, who donated the expenses. Sponsorship also came from the Kentucky Literacy Foundation, the Kentucky Litearcy Commission, the Kentucky Humanities Council and Eastern Kentucky University. More issues are being planned for 1990.

Kentucky Literacy Commission, 1100 U.S. 127 South, Building A, Suite 1, Frankfort, KY 40601.

In June, 1990 the literacy commisssion began publishing their first new-reader newspaper with sponsorship from the Louisville Courier Journal and Lexington Herald Leader. The newsletter will contain stories from students around the state and will be published every three months. Ron Horseman is the first student editor.

University Press of Kentucky, 633 South Limestone Street, Lexington, KY 40506-0336.

Recently the Kentucky Humanities Council developed a series New Books for New Readers. Although the books were written by noted local scholars, they are mentioned here because local literacy students did collaborate with the authors in chosing which materials to include and in field testing materials once they were chosen. All the stories are about Kentucky life, including Choices, stories about people making decisions related to their families; Women Who Made a Difference, History Mysteries based on Kentucky's past; Kentucky Folklore, and Why Work? Each book is $3.95 plus shipping and handling.

Maine

Waterville Adult Basic Education, Waterville, Maine. Contact Larinda Meade, State of Maine, Department of Education, State House Station #23, Augusta, ME 04333-0023.

Produces a newsletter with a variety of writing from program participants.

Massachusetts

Eastern and Central Massachusetts

Adult Education with Homeless Persons Project. Contact Sandy Brawders, Bureau of Adult Education, 1385 Hancock St., Quincy, MA 02116.

Within Massachusetts several programs which have received federal funds to work with homeless families are now beginning to involve learners in writing about their lives and experiences at shelters and within literacy programs.

Adult Literacy Resource Institute, c/o Boston Business School, 989 Commonwealth Ave., Boston, MA 02215.

Need I Say More: A Literary Magazine of Adult Student Writings is a professionally produced quarterly anthology of writings from students in programs throughout Boston. The pieces are chosen by a student editorial committee. Writers from the program have also participated in two yearly weekend writing workshops, one on an island close to Boston and one at a retreat center in Western Massachusetts. The pieces are organized by authors and consist of many powerful poems, stories and opinions. Authors from the publication also give workshops and readings at other local programs who want to get started with writing.

Boston Public Library, Copley Square, Boston, MA 02117.

Its Never Easy, produced in 1988, is a collection of autobiographical writings by adult learners who were involved in ESL or ABE classes at Boston University's Family Learning Center and was produced through a grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.

Chinese American Civic Association, Inc. 90 Tyler St., Boston, MA 02111.

This organization teaches ESL, literacy and workplace education to Chinese American, Southeast Asian and other non-English speaking adults. They have recently begun to produce several in-house publications. For example, their ESL/Engineering Technology Presparation program wrote American Dream (1990) which included stories about their hometowns, essays on the theme of "What I Thought of the USA Before I Came Here" and stories abbout their future. In Below the Whole Sky (1989) students from many countries wrote about their homes and used the book as a process of discussing issues related to the diversities of their home cultures.

El Centro del Cardenal. 1375 Washington St, Boston, MA 02118.

This Latino community-based organization published On Focus: Photographs and Writings By Students in 1988. Created by two groups of students and their teachers, who wanted to use taking photographs and slides to encourage writing, the stories and poems, written in both Spanish and English include themes such as Quien Soy Yo? (Who Am I?), Childhood, Mothers are Teachers, Letting Go and The Neighborhood. The book includes many candid sections by the teachers about how and why the stories were created and their experiences with a participatory project. The Center has also produced Our Own Words: First English Thoughts.

The English Family Literacy Project, University of Massachusetts, Boston, MA 02125-3393.

The English Family Literacy Project involves learners in many kinds of writing and local publishing. Talking Shop: A Curriculum Sourcebook for Participatory Adult ESL gives detailed, thoughtful descriptions of how teachers implemented writing in their ESL classrooms.

The Jefferson Park Writing Center, 6 Jefferson Park, Cambridge, MA, 02140.

In 1981 a group of women at the Jefferson Park Housing Project formed a creative writing group and began to publish a yearly magazine, Hear My Soul's Voice. Those authors in turn became teachers, helping to start writing groups at Franklin Hill and Roosevelt Towers and English as a Second Language groups made up of Haitian and Spanish speaking immigrants. Although most of the authors in Hear My Soul's Voice are not beginning writers, their books are included here because they represent a powerful example of community writing by people living in poverty. Many of these authors have gone on to work with beginning readers.

Jewish Vocational Services, 325 Harvard St., Boston, MA 02111.

Several learner written materials have been published through the auspices of Jewish Vocational Services. Pneumatic ESL: The Workplace and the Students in Their Own Words is an in-house anthology is written by a multi-level worker education class. Each page has a photograph of the student at work and his or her description of the job and experiences at work, starting with writing by beginners and moving into longer pieces at the end. Free Voices: A Collection of Essays by New Americans contains writing by Russian students. Cambodian Survivors in the U.S. is a collection of student writing based on an exhibition of photographs.

Literacy Volunteers of Massachusetts, P.O. Box 102, Prudential Station, Boston, MA 02199.

One to One: A Newsletter for Literacy Volunteers of Massachusetts, a state-wide newsletter, contains one or two pages of student writing and encourages students to write in with issues and news items.

Mujeres Unidas en Accion, 1534 Dorchester Avenue, Dorchester, MA 02122.

This community agency which works with low income Latina women, has endeavored to include students of various reading levels in all aspects of the project, including the rewriting of its Personnel Manual, the publication of a manual on AIDS and safe sex for mothers, in-class writing about families and scripts for theatre forums.

North, Central and Southern Regions

Greater Lawrence Community Action Program, Career Exploration and Education Center, Lawrence, MA.

This group has published From the Heart, a learner-written anthology.

Quinsigamond Community College, 670 Boylston St., Worcester, MA. 01606.

Workplace ESL, an in-house anthology, contains short personal thoughts, memories and photographs of immigrant students who work at TJ Maxx Department Store and of their instructors.

Western Massachusetts

The CARE Center, Holyoke, MA.

> Esperanzas y Recuerdos: Hopes and Memories is collection written by pregnant or parenting teenagers at the CARE Center. The project, which serves Hispanic women of varying reading levels, is starting a newsletter, and hopes to produce another anthology soon.

Chicopee Writing Workshop. Contact: Amherst Writers and Artist Press, Inc., P.O. Box 1076, Amherst, MA 01004.

> In Our Own Voices is another example of a publication based on a women's writing group whose purpose is creative writing rather than adult basic education. Many of the very strong pieces in the book are written by women from a local housing project who did not complete high school and contain powerful insights into issues that concern many adult beginning readers. This book is the result of a three year Chicopee Writing Workshop project funded by the Chicopee Arts Council and contains a thought provoking forward by the workshop leader, Pat Schneider.

Greenfield Community College, Division of Community Education, 1 College Drive, Greenfield, MA 01301.

> This recently published anthology, The New Word, consists of articles written by students from programs which are part of the Western Massachusetts Coalition for Literacy and is designed to provide a vehicle for more communication between programs. It is funded by the Coalition and the State of Massachusetts.

The Literacy Project, 57 Wells St., Greenfield, MA 01301.

> The Literacy Project Writes is an in-house anthology made up of writings of students from several rural sites of The Literacy Project. Each issue addresses a theme such as "What do I Want to Do" but also accepts writing about other topics. Students also publish articles in their monthly newsletter.

Literacy Volunteer Network, Private Industry Council and Regional Employment Board of Hampden County, Inc., 1350 Main St., Springfield, MA 01103.

> The Literacy Volunteer Network publishes an in-house student newsletter and recently published a calendar, which was sold to make money to buy materials for a student library.

Read/ Write/ Now Adult Learning Center, Brightwood Branch Library, 200 Birnie Avenue, Springfield, MA 01107.

> This programs exclusively for adult beginning readers publishes a quarterly newsletter, anthologies, cookbooks and many individual student autobiographies for use by members of the program and their families. Titles include: My Life in the Old Country, The Little Boy and the Hobo Man, A One Year Roller Coaster Ride, Que Sera Sera, My Strength Through Hard Times and others. The project also developed Tina and The Learner's Permit, a book about how to study for the oral driver's test, in close collaboration with two student advisors.

Workplace Education Program, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01103.

This literacy program for employees of the University of Massachusetts publishes The Learner Letter, written exclusively by learners.

Michigan

Michigan Literacy, Inc., Box 30007, 717 West Allegan, Lansing, MI 48909.

This program's new book, Writings for New Readers, consists of stories and poems. The programs asks that $1.05 be sent in stamps to cover the cost of mailing the book. They also publish student writing in their newsletter.

UAW/Ford/Eastern Michigan University Academy, Division of Corporate Services, 3rd Floor, Trustcorp Bank, Ypsilanti, MI 48197.

In this program for autoworkers, students use word processors to write for various kinds of publications, including company and union newsletters and local newspapers. They also contribute to a national magazine from the Applachian region.

Missori

Grace Hill Neighborhood Services, Eldertel, 2500 Hadley St., St. Louis, MO 63106.

The Eldertel program provides senior citizes who are beginning readers with a chance to write autobiographies.

Literacy Investment for Tomorrow, 300 S. Broadway, St. Louis, MO 63102.

Produces the New Missouri News, which includes a section for writing by new readers.

Nebraska

Omaha Public Schools, Vocational/Adult Education, 3215 Cuming St., Omaha, NE 68131-2024.

The Omaha Public Schools puts out Student News, a short, monthly newspaper with stories, recipes, poems, and cartoons.

New Hampshire

Adult Education Center, 20 Main St., Littleton, NH 03561.

This adult education center publishes the North Country Almanac containing poetry, folklore, stories and "wisdom" of the North Country. They cite the traditions of the early almanacs of New England's history as the inspiration for their publication.

Dover Adult Learning Center, 22 Atkinson Street, Dover, NH 03820.

The Dover Adult Learning Center produced their first publication, In Our Own Words, an anthology with writings from ABE, ESL, and GED students in June, 1989. They hope more will follow. The publication is available for purchase for $4.00.

New Hampshire ABE News, Second Start, 17 Knight Street, Concord, NH 03301.

The New Hampshire ABE News contains a student forum section.

New Jersey

Project Read, 404 University Ave., Newark, NJ 07102.

This Laubach-based program publishes a series of readers, some of which are made up of student booklets.

New Mexico

Albuquerque Literacy Program, 1701, 4th St. SW, Albuqueque, NM 87102.

Writes and publishes locally with adult beginning readers.

New York

Greater New York City

Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association, 965 Longwood Avenue, Bronx, NY 10459.

This job training and basic skills program for youth published an anthology Waking Up to See the Whole Day.

Bronx Educational Services, 969 Longwood Ave., Rm. 309, Bronx, NY 10459.

Has a student newsletter. With funding from Consolidated Edison, this project hosted a writing context for students in Bronx literacy programs and published an anthology based on the winning entries. Students have also written plays and uses word processors and data bases as writing tools.

Centro de Estudios Puertorriquenos, Hunter College, City University of New York, 695 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10021.

Publishes a monthly bulletin with poems and stories about local culture, occasionally including writing by beginning readers.

Discipleship, Inc. 5105 Seventh Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11220.

The Pre-GED program of the Discipleship Educational Center produces a large variety of student written publications. Student writing and photographs

dominate their monthly newsletter. They also frequently publish student anthologies including Our Words, Our Voices-A Part of Life which depicts problems facing young people in New York, Expressions: Works by New Writers and The Life of Experiences. Many pieces reflect the Christian orientation of the program.

Human Resources Administration, Community Development Agency, 110 Church Street, New York, NY 10007.

The New York City Adult Literacy Initiative of the New York State Education Program has provided funding for many small community-based programs to publish anthologies. Some of them include From the Students of the Ladies Committee for Puerto Rican Culture; Who Me, Yes, You, published by Promesa, Inc. a drug rehabilitation clinic which offers basic education; and books by the Mother's Reading Program of the American Reading Council; the Henry Street Settlement, Solidaridad Humana, and the Chinese American Planning Council.

International Ladies Garment Workers Union, 1710 Broadway, New York, NY.

For the past several years each site of the ILGWU had produced an annual student magazine. Students contribute writing or art work; the magazine is distributed at an end-of-term celebration. The program has also set up a student-run editorial group, has held a student-run workshop to train teachers, and produced a booklet based on that experience.

Lehman College Institute for Literacy Studies, Bedford Park Blvd. West, Bronx, NY 10468.

This institute has published a number of in-house student writing projects, including The Open Mind, an anthology. In the summer Lehman College hosts a workshop for literacy teachers interested in getting students involved with writing.

Literacy Assistance Center, Inc., 15 Dutch St., 4th Floor, New York, NY 10038.

The Literacy Assistance Center's newsletter Information Update devotes some issues entirely to student writing. They have also produced Varied Voices, an anthology which resulted from a day-long workshop on publishing student writing sponsored by the Community Development Agency and the Literacy Assistance Center in 1987.

Literacy Volunteers of New York City, 121 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013.

Since 1975 Literacy Volunteers of New York City has published more than 30 issues of The Big Apple Journal, a semi-annual anthology of writing by students around the city. Since 1988, with the help of foundation funding, they have published two commercially marketed paperback series for new readers: Writers' Voices, consisting of adaptions of books by well known authors and New Writers' Voices, written by adult beginning readers. New Writers' Voices includes anthologies-Speaking Out on Health, Speaking Out on Home and Family, Speaking from the Heart, and From My Imagination, a collection of creative writing and poetry. Two individual books by learners include When Dreams Come True, Calvin Miles' recollection of a Christmas growing up in the South and Theresa Sanservino's Can't Wait for Summer, about a seashore vacation. These

books also describe how the books were made and suggestion for their use. Each is available for $3.50 plus shipping and handling. Views and Reviews, a quarterly book review by and for new readers contains reviews of books by beginning readers and others. Subscriptions are $6.50 for four issues.

New York City Centers for Reading and Writing, 444 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY.

Local sites of the Center for Reading and Writing publish in-house anthologies such as The St. Agnes Journal and the Fordham Journal for distribution to students and other programs. Some of the writing is produced at special Saturday Writing Workshops. Some pieces focus on themes. For example, the Harlem Branch Library produced Cooking Traditions: Reflections of Continuity and Fordham wrote The Spirits Walk about ghosts and the supernatural. The Center has also published one or two books by individual writers, including New York, New York a book for beginners by Dorothy Butterfield and I Couldn't Do It Alone by Inez Jackson.

The Open Book, 421 5th Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11215.

The Open Book, a community-based adult basic education center, has published Stories from the Heart: Writings from the Open Book, an anthology and many other materials. Recently they produced Four Stories: Oral Histories from The Open Book, reflective, in-depth stories by people who were born and grew up in Brooklyn.

Queens Borough Public Library, 89-11 Merrick Blvd., Jamaica, NY 11432.

The Adult Learning Center publishes a quarterly journal and an annual holiday book of stories, recipes and traditional celebrations.

Washington Houses Community Center, 1775 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10029.

Young adults in this program learn to use word processors and produce a newsletter.

York College, The City University of New York, 94-20 Guy R. Brewer Blvd., Jamaica, New York 11451.

The Basic Education program, the CUNY Prep Program and the City Works program of York College Community Learning Center together frequently publish high quality anthologies. For example, Student Writing, Spring 1989 includes selections for Black history month including biographies of famous Black people, reviews of films and books and stories about civil rights. Individual programs also produce smaller photocopied in-house anthologies. One issue, published during adult learning week includes stories related to the title: How I Learned to Read.

The Young Adult Learning Center, NYC Board of Education, 320 E. 96th St., New York, NY 10028.

For several years the YALA Center has produced high quality anthologies written primarily by Black and Puerto Rican young people. One publication, Making Math Personal includes stories about how students found ways to relate math to their personal experiences.

New York State

Literacy Volunteers of Nassau County, 250 Fulton Avenue, Suite 514, Hempstead, NY 11550.

Produces a student booklet as part of its annual student recognition activities.

Literacy Volunteers of Suffolk County, New York, 627 N. Sunrise Service Road, Bellport, NY 11713.

This program produces a quarterly journal of writings called Reading for Life. The journal grew out of monthly writing workshops held to encourage learners and tutors aroung the county to write together. Biographies of the authors are included at the end of the book. The books can be purchased for $2.00 each.

Volunteer Literacy Corps, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Box F-12, Geneva, NY 14456.

In this federally funded program to involve college students in adult literacy, students work together with adult beginning readers to write and publish at six local sites. One project included a collaboration with the Geneva Head Start Program to produce a book of stories, poems and articles to commemorate the anniversary of Head Start. The group also created a theatrical adaptation of a children's story, "The Hungry Catapiller", oral histories and intergenerational projects including a book of family histories and recipes, a book of stories from grandmothers, and a project by and for Amish children and their parents.

North Carolina

Motheread Project, 4208 Six Fork Rd, Bldg. 2, Suite 335, Raleigh, NC 17609.

An intergenerational reading program in which many of the participants are women inmates, this program has published learner writing and an anthology

North Carolina Center for Literacy Development, 7406-D Chapel Hill Rd, Raleigh, NC 27607.

This non-profit agency provides training for literacy workers and learners. In 1989 they published I Tried to Write About My Life: A Collection of Learner Centered Curriculum Pieces. This handbook includes examples of student writing and gives teachers ideas for how to develop exercises to address specific reading, writing and critical thinking skills to go with writing by learners.

Vance Granville Community College, 210 West Ridgeway St., Warrenton, NC 27589.

Produces many in-house publications with learners.

Ohio

The Ohio Litearcy Network, 1500 West Lake Ave., Columbus, OH 43220.

Their newsletter The Literacy Communicator, has a student section which includes writing from learners around the state.

Pennsylvania

The Center for Literacy, 3723 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19104-3189.

The Center for Literacy includes one or two pages of student writing in their quarterly newsletter. They are also in the process of developing three books for adult literacy learners which will be completed in the fall of 1990, with funds form the Knight Foundation. One will be an anthology of student writings. A lesson/activity book to accompany the anthology and a resource book on lesson planning will be published at the same time. The Center for Literacy has also published a tutor training manual with a section on writing and a book by Jeanne Smith about the using computers with language experience.

Greater Pittsburg Literacy Council, 5920 Kirkwood St., Pittsburg, PA 15206.

Publishes "Let's Grow Together" a newsletter by and for GPLC students.

The Lutheran Settlement House, Women's Program, 1340 Frankford Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19125.

The Lutheran Settlement House has encouraged students to write for many years. One of their early books, based on oral histories told by students in basic reading classes, was republished as Remembering, Books 1 and 2 by New Readers Press, Laubach Literacy International. The program has also published books on teaching writing.

Pennsylvania State Department of Education, Division of Adult Education and Training Program, 333 Market Street, Harrisburg, PA 17126.

In 1984-1985 the state conducted a writing contest for ABE, GED and ESL students around the state with the aim of publishing an anthology based on the work submitted. The resulting book was called Our Words, Our Voices, Our Worlds and contains poetry, non-fiction and fictional stories. The project also published an extensive description of the entire process, called Publishing an Anthology of Adult Student Writing: A Partnership for Literacy. Both are available through ERIC ED260 184 and 185.

The Urban Studies and Community Services Center, LaSalle University, 5501 Wister St., Philadelphia, PA 19144.

In 1986 Azi Ellowitch, a curriculum developer at this center, developed a curriculum manual of reading and language activities based on in depth oral histories with six people who lived in local neighborhoods. Funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the book also includes reactions by other ESL and basic education students from Jamaica, the Philippines, the

Ukraine, Angola and Cambodia who field tested the materials. Available through ERIC ED288 998.

Rhode Island

The Adult Academy of Brown University, 345 Blackstone Blvd., Weld Bldg., Providence, RI 02906.

Expressions is a new publication which is part of The New Writers and Readers Project, funded by the Rhode Island Foundation. The pieces in the newsletter are selected by an Editorial Board made up of learners from seven basic education programs. The June issue contains stories of growing up in Providence.

DORCAS Place, 903 Broad St., Providence, RI 02907.

Produced a cookbook and other in-house publications.

International Institute of Rhode Island, 421 Elmwood Avenue, Providence, RI 02907.

Classes at the International Institute produce anthologies illustrated with photographs of their families and classmates and exchnage them with other classes. Some students dictate while others act as scribes. Students are non-native English speakers.

Traveler's Aid of Rhode Island, 1 Sabin St., Providence, RI 02903.

Students produce in-house publications.

Washington County Adult Learning Center, Government Center, 4808 Town Hill Road, Wakefield, RI 02879.

Authors write short books and stories.

Texas

Literacy Volunteers, Sterling Municipal Library, Mary Elizabeth Wilbanks Ave., Bayton, TX 77520.

Publishes Brighter Horizons, consisting of student writing.

Vermont

Adult Basic Education, 14 School Street, Bristol, VT 05472.

One of the oldest continuing newspapers written entirely by ABE students, the Green Mountain Eagle is published monthly on newsprint in a 16 page newspaper format. It began in the mid-seventies and is funded by the state ABE Program. Students from all over the state submit articles, stories and poetry based on topics they have written about with their tutors, including life in Vermont, trips, stories about family, stories about the past, hobbies, jobs, homelessness and alcoholism. Last February the newpaper started a student

advisory committee and has recently conducted surveys which aim to involve learners more integrally in decisions related to the newspaper.

Opening Doors Books, Box 379, Bristol, VT 05472.

Inspired by reading books from the Parkdale Project in Canada, the Opening Doors project began with two groups of writers in the Rutland and Bristol ABE programs. Using money from a grant to the Rutland Free Library, and with the help of experienced artists, the group has produced six professional quality books. Titles include: The Night Rape, The Lord Will Keep You Going, The Fall Guy, An Accident that Changed My Life, Left Handed, and My Jobs in Italy. The books sell for $3.95 each plus $1.50 for postage and handling (.25 for each additional book).

Homegrown Books, Adult Basic Education, 14 School Street, Bristol, VT 05443.

After the Opening Doors project was completed the Bristol ABE program continued their writers' group. Four authors whose books were not chosen to be published through Opening Doors contributed to the anthology Country Women. More recently My Life as an Orphan by Mary Bower was published. Price: $3.95 plus postage and handling.

Virginia

Literacy Volunteers of Fauquier County, PO Box 3177, 65 Culpeper St., Warrenton, VA 22186.

Publishes Reading Right on Route 29.

Washington

Big Bend Community College, 28th and Chanute St., Moses Lake, WA 98837.

Produces in-house publications.

Goodwill Literacy Adult Learning Center, 1400 South Lane, Seattle, WA 98144.

Publishes learner writing and has distributed a calendar with photographs and writings of learners.

Washington Literacy, 1110 Denny Way, Seattle, WA 98109.

New Voices, written by new readers, includes poems and stories. This 50 page magazine is published yearly and available for $3.50 plus postage.

West Virginia

Michael Tierney, 659 Big Ugly Creek-East, Leet, WV 25536.

Michael Tierney is working with new writers to produce Words Walking and has plans for more publications in West Virginia.

Wisconsin

Madison Literacy Council, 406 E. Wilson St., Madison, WI 53703.

Publishes a newsletter written by learners.

National

Laubach Literacy Action, 1320 Jamesville Ave., Syracuse, NY 13210.

Laubach publishes a national student newsletter called Students Speaking Out, which reports on the activities of local and national student congresses and other advocacy activities of interest to learners. Available for a subscription fee of $5.00.

APPENDIX G
SOURCES FOR PUBLICATIONS IN GREAT BRITAIN AND CANADA

Great Britain

Avanti Books, 1 Wellington Road, Stevenage, Herts, SG2 9HR, Great Britian.

> Avanti is a clearinghouse for many of the publications by adult literacy students mentioned in this study, including Peckham Publishing Project, Gatehouse Publishing Project, Centerprise Publishing Projects and back issues of Write First Time. Their catalog is available on request.

Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, Kingsbourne House, 229/231 High Holborn, London, England WC1V 7DA.

> ALBSU is a national clearinghouse for literacy-related activities in Great Britain. The catalog contains teacher training materials including Sue Gardner Shrapnel's Conversations with Strangers, Write Away From It All: A Guide to Writing Events, a video of about a writing weekend in North Wales and other materials of interest to adult writing teachers.

Canada

Dominie Press, 1361 Huntingwood Drive, Unit 7, Agincourt, Ontario M1S 3J1.

> Domine Press distributes materials written by learners at East End Literacy in Toronto, including individual books and The Writer's Voice, their newsletter, along with a wide variety of teacher training materials.

International Council for Adult Education, Women's Program, 394 Euclid Avenue, Suite 308, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6G 2S9.

> ICAE publishes Voices Rising, a journal for adult educators, devoted their January, 1990 issue to literacy problems facing women in countries around the world. They included submissions by adult learners. Copies are available in English, French and Spanish for $5.00.

Lower Mainland Society and Employment, 14525 110A Ave., Surrey, B.C. V3R 2B4, Lee Weinstein.

> This British Columbian program publishes Voices: New Writers for New Readers, perhaps the most widely distributed learner written magazine in North America. Now in its second year, the magazine includes writing from basic education and ESL learners. Each story is printed on a single page along with a biographical sketch of the author. The facing page has a high quality, professional photograph of the author or authors in their home setting. Stories by beginning readers are in the front section called Beginnings/New Words. The second section is called Transition/Later Writings. Other sections include Work/Notes and Teaching/Learning which sometimes includes contributions from teachers. Contributors come from all over Canada and the United States and as far away as South Africa in this magazine funded by the Canadian and British Columbian governments. The annual subscription rate is $12.00.

Parkdale People's Press Books, Parkdale Project Read, 1303 Queen St. West, Toronto, Ontario M6K 1L6.

Parkdale Project Read has begun to distribute copies of learner books, such a She's Speaking Out! by Janet Ryan and My Story by Olive Bernard and copies of their newsletter, Parkdale Writes for sale at a minimal cost.

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